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Saturday 17 October 2009

# Photographer

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**TWIN  
TEST**

Nikon D300s versus Pentax K-7

**More pixels  
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Can the **Pentax K-7** outgun Nikon's enthusiast flagship?

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Colin Varndell's hot  
tips for cool mornings

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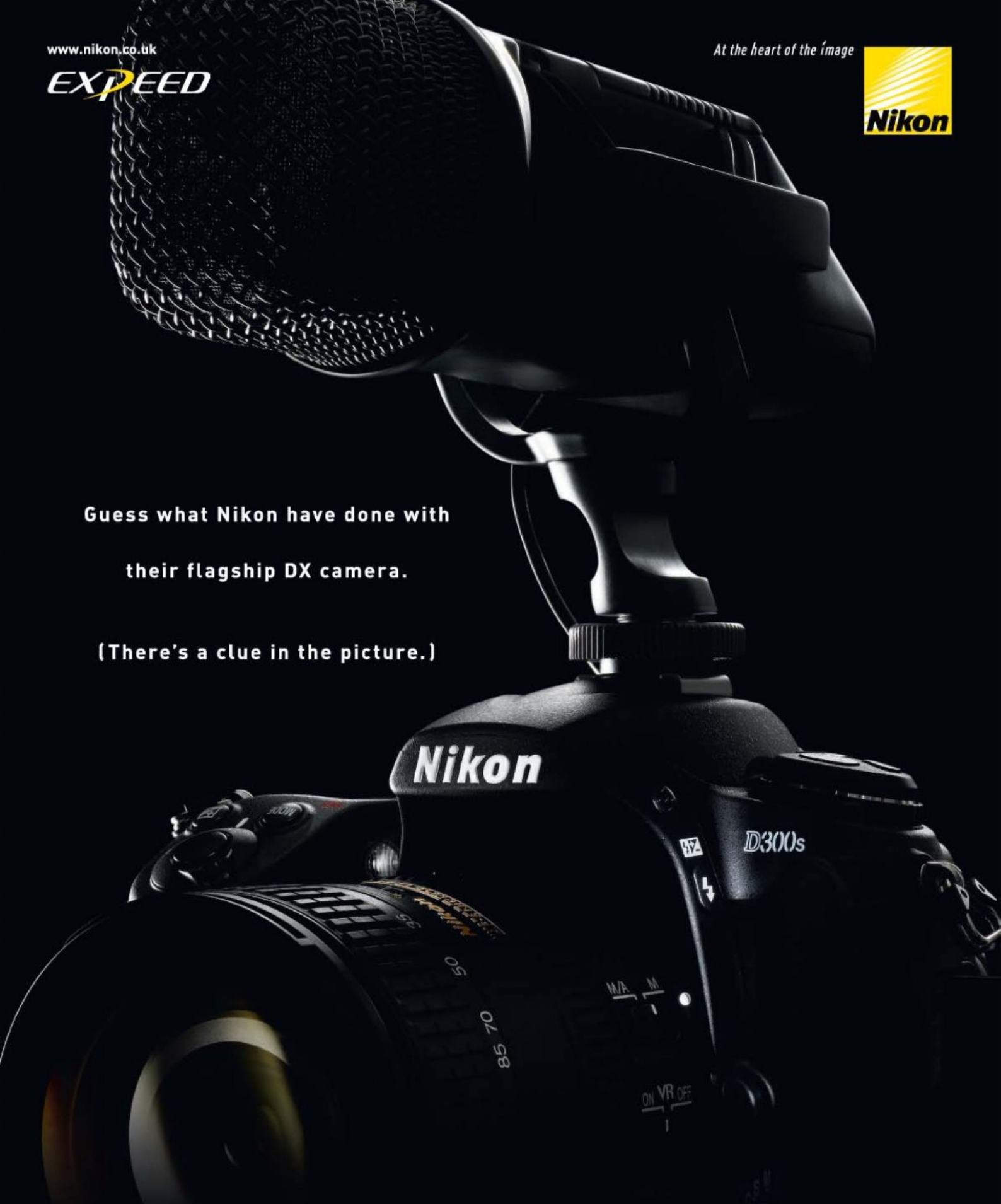


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**Amateur Photographer** For everyone who loves photography

## Feeling blue?



**Damien Demolder**  
Editor

Having just had the flu jab, immunity is on my mind. Though they don't bother me especially injections are

never much fun, but the momentary sting, the numb arm (or behind, if you are lucky) and the 'mild' symptoms are a small price for avoiding far worse later on. Returning to my desk (AP subsidises our jabs to make sure we're never off work), I had an email from a company offering further immunity: this time against Seasonal Affective Disorder. I can understand flu, measles, smallpox, yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis, but I've never got to grips with SAD. Then I realised – being a photographer should give us all immunity.

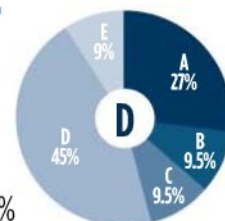
While the rest of the country gets depressed at the in-coming dawn, I've been delighted to come to work in the half-light these past few weeks. London's streets are lit with a multitude of colours and the sky has been a wonderful purple. Autumn must surely be one of the best times of year for photographers – there's so much to take pictures of you need to get up extra early. Colin Varndell has some great advice this week on page 20 to get us started. Chances not to be mist indeed!

## Our question of the week

**In AP 3 October we asked...**  
For how long have you been reading AP?

**You answered...**

A 1-5 years 27%  
B 6-10 years 9.5%  
C 11-20 years 9.5%  
D 20-50 years 45%  
E More than 50 years 9%



**This week we ask...**

**Isn't autumn just the best season for photography?**

A Yes B No, winter is C No, summer is D No, spring is E They're all as good as each other

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[www.amateurphotographer.co.uk](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk)

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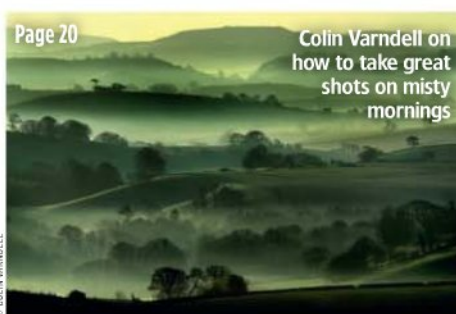


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How to set up your own location shoot

## Send us your pictures

To have your pictures published in Gallery, send in a selection of up to ten images. They can be either a selection of different images or all have the same theme. Digital files sent on CD should be saved in a Photoshop-compatible format, such as JPEG or TIFF, with a contact sheet and submission form. Visit [www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/apgallery](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/apgallery) for details. We cannot publish images without the necessary technical details. Each RGB image should be a minimum of 2480 pixels along its longest length. Transparencies and prints are also accepted. We recommend that transparencies are sent without glass mounts and posted via Special Delivery. For transparencies, prints or discs to be returned you must include an SAE with sufficient postage.



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Colin Varndell on how to take great shots on misty mornings

© COLIN VARNDELL

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News | Analysis | Comment | PhotoDiary 17/10/09

# News

**Number 10's response to this e-petition once again clouds the issue**

More confusion over PM policy, page 6



Obscene publications squad 'advise' gallery | 'Art' picture removed

## Museum removes naked Brooke Shields photo

**A** NUDE photo of Brooke Shields as a child actress was removed from public view at a London gallery just hours before it was due to go on show amid concerns it would breach the Obscene Publications Act.

The 'photograph of a photograph' by artist Richard Prince shows a ten-year-old Brooke Shields standing naked in a bath in 1975, her face heavily made-up.

Entitled 'Spiritual America', the work had been due to go on show at Tate Modern on 1 October, but was taken down after a visit by police, despite having been displayed lawfully in the United States.

The controversial image was set to be displayed in a separate room away from other exhibits, with a warning to visitors placed outside.

The exhibition, Pop Life: Art

in a Material World, runs at London's Tate Modern until 17 January 2010.

In a statement, the Metropolitan Police said: 'Officers from the Metropolitan Police Service Obscene Publications Unit met with staff at the Tate Modern on 30 September regarding an image that was part of an exhibition due to open at the gallery on Thursday 1 October.

'The officers have specialist experience in this field and are keen to work with gallery management to ensure that they do not inadvertently break the law or cause any offence to their visitors.'

A spokeswoman for Tate Modern did not rule out

a future reappearance of the image, but refused to comment as 'discussions' with police continue. She added: 'The room has been temporarily closed. We are in discussion with police. We will provide an update as soon as possible.'

Asked whether the museum might reinstate the picture to the exhibition, police said: 'The decision as to whether to display it or not rests with Tate Modern.'

Speaking before the image was taken down, Michele Elliott of Kidscape said it was 'bordering on child pornography'.

The original photo was taken by US photographer Garry Gross, who told *The Daily Telegraph* he was 'disappointed' at the decision to remove the work.

Most recently the image was shown at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

The police spokesman added that, as a matter of routine, the Met would have consulted with the Crown Prosecution Service before advising the museum.

**The 1975 image of Shields – a 'photograph of a photograph' – was removed from the Tate Modern exhibition before it went on show. However, it has been exhibited in the US and, more recently, as pictured here, in an American photography magazine**



## Sigma upgrades DP1 digital compact



SIGMA has announced an upgrade to its APS-C-sensor compact camera, the DP1.

The new model, called the DP1s, is said to allow the Quick Set function, used by the DP2 and SD14 cameras, to be allocated to the digital zoom buttons on the rear of the camera.

Sigma also claims improved metering for backlit subjects.

Other than these two features it seems the DP1s is exactly the same as the

previous model that was launched in early 2008.

The cameras share the same '14 million-pixel' Foveon X3 sensor, the same 16.6mm f/4 lens and the ability to record both raw and JPEG files.

The camera comes with Sigma Photo Pro software.

Pricing and availability for the Sigma DP1s had yet to be announced at the time of writing.



### Apology

In last week's 'The Kit we Used' feature, AP omitted a very important detail: a heartfelt thanks for the assistance and advice afforded to us by Peter Loy, Mr Cad and Chiswick Camera Centre. All three kindly lent AP equipment used in the photography for the article, and Peter Loy's advice about the Watson, Adams and Leica cameras shown in the piece was invaluable. Interested readers may like to know that these cameras are available for sale from Peter Loy (at £125 for the Adams Videx Popular, £499 for the Watson, and £295 for the Leica III) at [www.peterloy.com](http://www.peterloy.com) or call 0208 867 2751. Mr Cad, of Croydon, holds an extensive stock of used equipment, including the Olympus OM-4 used in our article (at £289), and a full stock list can be found at [www.mrcad.co.uk](http://www.mrcad.co.uk), or call 0208 684 8282. Unfortunately, since publication, the 8mm fisheye pictured alongside the OM-4 has since been sold by Chiswick Camera Centre, but its wide range of used and new stock can be browsed at its west London store and at [www.chiswickcameras.co.uk](http://www.chiswickcameras.co.uk). Call 0208 995 9114 for details. Old Timer Cameras, which stocks copies of AP test reports going back to 1884, also provided us with valuable assistance. It can be contacted via [www.testreports.co.uk](http://www.testreports.co.uk) or by calling 01707 273 773.



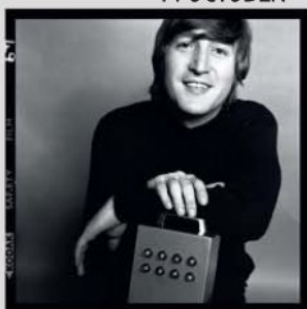
# PhotoDiary

A week of photographic opportunity

WEDNESDAY

14 OCTOBER

**EXHIBITION** Duffy: The First Exhibition – images by Bryan Duffy, until 7 November at Chris Beetles Gallery, London SW1Y 6QB. Visit [www.chrisbeetles.com](http://www.chrisbeetles.com).  
**EXHIBITION** A Celebration of British Wildlife, until 16 October at Hoopers Gallery, London EC1R 0AA. Visit [www.hoopersgallery.co.uk](http://www.hoopersgallery.co.uk).



© BRIAN DUFFY

THURSDAY

15 OCTOBER

**DON'T MISS** From Portraits to Photographs at Anglesey Abbey, Gardens and Lode Mill, Cambridge CB25 9EJ. Tel: 01223 810 080. Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk). **EXHIBITION** The People of the Forest: 20 Years of Images from the Rainforest Foundation, until 18 October at Proud Camden, London NW1 8AH. Tel: 0207 482 3867. Visit [www.proudcamden.com](http://www.proudcamden.com).

FRIDAY

16 OCTOBER



© NETA MADAHAR

**EXHIBITION** Bradford Fellowship: Neeta Madahar, until 21 February 2010 at National Media Museum, West Yorkshire BD1 1NQ. Visit [www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk](http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk).  
**EXHIBITION** The East Anglians by Justin Partyka, until 13 December at Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ. Tel: 01603 593 199. Visit [www.scva.ac.uk](http://www.scva.ac.uk).

SATURDAY

17 OCTOBER

**EXHIBITION** Sara Ramo: Movable Planes, until 17 January 2010 at The Photographers' Gallery, London WC2H 7HB. Tel: 0845 262 1618. Visit [www.photonet.org.uk](http://www.photonet.org.uk). **EXHIBITION** Jim Goldberg: Open See, until 17 October 2010 at The Photographers' Gallery, London WC2H 7HB. Tel: 0845 262 1618. Visit [www.photonet.org.uk](http://www.photonet.org.uk).

SUNDAY

18 OCTOBER

**EXHIBITION** Micro Sensations, features images from a Victorian microscope collection held in Exeter, at Knighthayes Court, Devon EX16 7RQ. Tel: 01884 254 665. Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk). **EXHIBITION** Patti Smith photographs, until 1 November at Dimbola Lodge, Isle of Wight PO40 9QE. Tel: 01983 756 814. Visit [www.dimbola.co.uk](http://www.dimbola.co.uk).

MONDAY

19 OCTOBER

**EXHIBITION** Re-imagining October, Russian and Eastern European photos and moving images, until 6 December at Calvert22, London E2 7JP. Tel: 0207 613 2141. Visit [www.calvert22.org](http://www.calvert22.org). **EXHIBITION** Byker Revisited by Finnish photographer Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, until 31 October at Side Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 3JE. Tel: 0191 232 2208. Visit [www.amber-online.com](http://www.amber-online.com).

TUESDAY

20 OCTOBER

**EXHIBITION** Growing-up Black by Dennis Morris, until 23 January 2010 at Hackney Museum Technology and Learning Centre, London E8 1GQ. Tel: 0208 356 3000. Visit [www.hackney.gov.uk/black-history-month](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/black-history-month). **DON'T MISS** Walk on the wild side, at Dyrham Park (near Bath), Gloucestershire SN14 8ER (11.15am-12.15pm). Tel: 0117 937 2501. Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).

## News



**AP RIGHTS WATCH**  
Committed to defending your photographic rights!

It is not illegal to photograph a police officer, Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said. Yet the statement, issued on the Downing Street website, has sparked confusion among photographers.

Brown issued the statement in response to an e-petition launched on the Number 10 website earlier this year.

The petition had called for Section 58A of the Terrorism Act to be withdrawn and for such 'photography restrictions' to be lifted.

In response, the PM said: 'Section 58A [introduced on 16 February] makes it an offence to publish, communicate, elicit or attempt to elicit information about any such persons which is of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.'

He added: 'Contrary to some media and public misconception, Section 58A does not make it illegal to photograph a police officer, military personnel or member of the intelligence services.'

The PM said that photographers have a statutory defence to criminal action if they can prove they had a 'reasonable excuse' to take the picture.

However, journalist Alex Singleton, of *The Daily Telegraph*, viewed the

statement as far from clearcut.

He said it will do nothing to reassure photographers and says 'the mess will only get worse'.

Writing on his blog, he said: 'It's ignored the vagueness in the law and told photographers that what they need is to prove that they have a legitimate "excuse".'

'It says that an innocent tourist or other sightseer taking a photograph of a police officer is likely to have a reasonable "excuse" and that "legitimate journalistic activity" (such as covering a demonstration for a newspaper) is likely to constitute such an "excuse".'

'But actually,' Singleton added, 'this just makes it more confusing. What does "likely" mean in this context? Doesn't it mean that even "innocent tourists" could be committing an offence?'

John Tracy, chief executive of the Bureau of Freelance Photographers, told AP: 'No 10's response to this e-petition once again clouds the issue. It implies that it is only legitimate to photograph a police officer if you are a press photographer or a tourist.'

'Yet the fact is it is perfectly legal to photograph a police officer – or anyone else for that matter – in a public place. It is not just press photographers or tourists who have a "reasonable excuse" for taking such pictures. By definition, you do not have to have a "reasonable excuse" to carry out a legal activity.'

## Comment

Chris Cheesman  
News editor

So where does this leave us? Many will see Gordon Brown's response as weasel words – merely anguishing, rather than placating, photographers by restating the Home Office's response to the controversy that erupted when the new legislation was introduced earlier this year. If the clumsily worded Section 58A was not designed to confuse, it certainly has and is still doing so eight months since it became law. It seems that you are just as likely to be stopped taking a photograph of a police officer today as you were on 17 February, the day after it took effect. So, is it legal to take photos of a police officer? 'Well, yes but...' Downing Street seems to be saying. The Government might just as well have repeated its standard response to photographers' complaints, which is, in short: 'It is not our intention to stop photographers.' That may be the case, but it still happens. After the expected upcoming government budget cuts, will the PM be saying: 'It was never our intention to reduce services?'



## SNAP SHOT

### Irving Penn dies

Legendary photographer Irving Penn has died, aged 92, at his home in Manhattan, New York. Penn began his career as a fashion photographer for *Vogue* in the 1940s and is credited as one of the first photographers to cross from commercial to art photography using the same technique. He strove to achieve perfection in his work through the printing process.

### Paps sue over shooting

Two photographers are suing a supermodel and a football star, accusing their bodyguards of shooting at them after they had taken pictures at the couple's 'after-wedding party'. Agence France-Press (AFP) photographer Yuri Cortez and freelancer Rolando Aviles have accused Tom Brady and Gisele Bündchen of 'negligence and carelessness'. They are seeking \$1m (£615,000) in damages over the incident, which occurred in Costa Rica in April.

### Zeiss prices

Carl Zeiss has confirmed UK prices for its recently announced 18mm and 21mm lenses. The Canon EF-mount Distagon T\* 21mm f/2.8 ZE will go on sale later this month priced £1,449. Meanwhile, the 18mm f/3.5 Distagon T\* lens, designed for users of full-frame Canon DSLRs, will cost £1,149.

### Charger

A new charger for lithium-ion and NiMH batteries has been launched by Camlink. Designed to accept AA and AAA batteries, the Camlink Z1 Universal Charger comes with a 12V cord to allow charging from cars, for example. It costs £34.99. Visit [www.camlink.eu.com](http://www.camlink.eu.com) for details.

### Correction

The Canon cashback promotion stated in 'News', AP 10 October (page 7) only applies to UK photographic students and lecturers. Apologies for any confusion caused.

# AP reader caught in da Vinci code trail

An AP reader claims to have found the world's first photo after a trail that led to Leonardo da Vinci. Sceptics abound, writes Chris Cheesman

**A** PHOTOGRAPHY enthusiast is battling to re-write the history books after a three-year project left him convinced that a famous 16th-century engraving is the 'world's first photograph'.

Welshman Roger Davies also claims to have uncovered a secret code in the artwork, leading him to conclude that the 1514 engraving is a photograph of a previously un-attributed drawing by Leonardo da Vinci. Davies came up with his intriguing theory after scrutinising 'Melancholia', a famous engraving by renowned German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer.

The former contractor for the Atomic Weapons Establishment, who has a background in optics, claims the 9in-high Dürer masterpiece was no such thing, but rather a photograph of a much larger da Vinci drawing – perhaps 8ft (2.4m) tall – exposed and then fixed onto a 'light-sensitive' copper plate, placed inside a camera obscura.

'It's basically a photograph of a drawing,' says the retired electrical engineer, adding that the exposure time may have taken several days.

He claims Dürer then used the plate to run off hundreds

of prints in his name more than three centuries before Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre first experimented with the permanent fixing of a photographic image using chemicals.

### Da Vinci link claim

By magnifying a high-resolution digital image of the engraving, the 66-year-old says he can show that lines on the print are so close together – 1/6mm in one area – that it would have been physically impossible to hand engrave them with such accuracy and consistency, even for the master technician that Dürer was.

Davies believes that da Vinci created his artwork before 1507 and then gave Dürer the photographic plate.

Davies says he suspected a da Vinci connection after spotting that the cherub in the 'Melancholia' image has similar facial features to a figure depicted in a da Vinci sketch.

Also, key to it being the work of da Vinci, he asserts, is the Italian artist's renowned level of knowledge of mathematics and geometry, in addition to what some believe was da Vinci's practice of planting secret messages in his work.

'It's not a random drawing.



© THE PROJECTS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

It's a mathematically geometrical structure,' says Davies.

He believes da Vinci implanted a hidden code in the work connected to the prediction of future geophysical events such as earthquakes (see [www.amateurphotographer.co.uk](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk) for details).

Davies suggests that the layout was a deliberate attempt to create a type of astronomical calculator, linked to the cycles of the Sun and the Moon relative to the Earth.

Davies says he found that when superimposing computer-generated lines (see above) over 'Melancholia', they radiate from two distinct areas of the image corresponding to lunar and solar cycles. The lines, he insists, align themselves with various key points in the image, such as the thread marks in the rope (top right in the picture) and the jagged edges of the knife (bottom).

Furthermore, these 'precise radial graduations' (not visible on the artwork itself) totalled 532, or multiples of that figure, leading Davies to suggest that the artist created the piece to conform with a predetermined 'symmetrical' geometric pattern.

Davies argues that da Vinci used a thin pencil to draw these lines as an 'underlay' to a drawing, which was

then photographed using a camera obscura.

Davies's theory is backed by Lee Hooker, director of Antiquity at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. Hooker, who translates ancient documents as part of her work, told us: 'Mr Davies does seem to have come up with something remarkable.'

### An 'impossible' idea

However, AP's photo-science consultant Geoffrey Crawley said: 'It's an impossible idea that the multi-faceted element lens needed to be able to produce that image could have existed 100 years before even the first telescope...'

Davies retorts that a concave mirror lens would have been capable of projecting an image onto the plate in sufficient detail.

Giulia Bartrum, curator of German Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, says that engravers would have used optics only to help magnify the detail in their work.

She told AP that working in a finely detailed manner was 'commonplace' and insists that the engraving bears the groove marks left by a 'burin', the tool engravers used, when viewed under a microscope.

For the full story visit [www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/news](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/news).



Roger Davies used sophisticated computer graphics to back his claim



## Photographers highlight 'housing crisis'

**P**HOTOGRAPHERS, including legend David Bailey, have raised more than £100,000 for housing charity Shelter.

The money was raised in an auction of photos designed to look like playing cards, as part of a campaign organised by the charity to highlight the 'depth of Britain's housing crisis'.

The auction was held at the Haunch of Venison gallery in London, where visitors were asked to place silent bids during an exhibition that took place at the end of last month.

The work also included submissions by artist Damien



Hirst and fashion designer Vivienne Westwood.

Photographer Tom Hunter, who created the 'Queen of Diamonds' card, said: 'Having a home is core to people's

happiness and security. I lived in a squat for many years and can really remember the insecure feeling that living in temporary housing gives you.'

Shelter's chief executive Sam Younger said: 'We are delighted that the very best in British art and design have come together to help us create this once-in-a-lifetime event.'

A thousand limited-edition 'oversized packs of cards', featuring artwork from the exhibition, will go on sale at [www.shelterhouseofcards.org.uk](http://www.shelterhouseofcards.org.uk).

They cost £70 each, with all profits going to Shelter.

## Newsweek in photo row

A PHOTOGRAPHER has accused leading US news and current affairs magazine *Newsweek* of butchering his image of former US vice-president Dick Cheney, claiming that it cropped the photo and published it out of context.

David Hume Kennerly, who has won the Pulitzer Prize for Photography, wrote in a *Newsweek* blog (pictured): 'Featured inside the magazine was a full-page, standalone picture of former US vice-president Dick Cheney, knife in hand, leaning over a bloody carving board. *Newsweek* used it to illustrate a quote that he made about CIA interrogators. By linking that photo with Mr Cheney's comment and giving it such prominence, they implied something sinister, macabre, or even evil was going on there.'

The photographer said *Newsweek* chose to crop out two-thirds of the original image – which was actually a portrait of the Cheney family in their kitchen getting ready for dinner.

Kennerly accused *Newsweek* of committing 'photo fakery'. He claimed: '*Newsweek's* choice to run my picture as a political cartoon



The photograph that *Newsweek* has been accused of 'butchering'

not only embarrassed and humiliated me and ridiculed the subject of the picture, but it ultimately denigrated my profession.'

In response, a *Newsweek* spokesman said: 'We doubt that any reasonable reader would, in David's phrase, think something "sinister, macabre, or even evil" was going on in that image as presented.'

The publication denied it had altered the photo, but agreed it had cropped the image, adding that is an 'accepted practice of photographers, editors and designers'.

'We cropped the photograph, using editorial judgment to show the most interesting part of it.'

*Newsweek* said it wanted to make an 'editorial point' about Cheney's 'red-blooded, steak-eating, full-throated defence of his views and values'.

## ClubNews

AP's weekly round-up of club news from all over Britain

### Cambridge Camera Club

The club's annual exhibition takes place from 26-31 October at The Cambridge Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge CB2 3QJ. More than 200 images will be on show. It is open on Monday 26 October 1pm-5pm, Tuesday 27-Saturday 31 October 10am-5pm.

### Oldham Photographic Society

The new season kicks off on 22 October with a talk by Tony Keely celebrating '50 years behind the lens'. The event takes place at 7.15pm in the Blue Room, Oldham Conservative Club, Victoria Street, Chadderton, Oldham, Greater Manchester. Visit [www.oldhamps.org.uk](http://www.oldhamps.org.uk).

### South Birmingham Photographic Society

The society this year celebrates its 40th season. Meetings take place at 7.30pm-10pm on Friday evenings. Members get together at the Friends Meeting House, Stratford Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, from September-May. Visit [www.sbpps.org.uk](http://www.sbpps.org.uk)

Send club news to: [apecvents@ipcmedia.com](mailto:apecvents@ipcmedia.com)

## SNAPSHOT

### Shares plunge

Jessops' share price fell to its lowest point this year after a restructuring deal that means Jessops' main business will be 47% owned by its bank, HSBC. The firm's share price fell to 0.5p per share before recovering to 1.15p each. The day before the shares were worth 2.13p.

### PMA snub

Canon USA has stated that it will not attend next year's Photo Marketing Association (PMA) trade show – the world's largest annual imaging event – to be held in California, USA. In a statement the firm said: 'With the industry shifting, and the convergence of technology becoming more prevalent across Canon's broad product portfolio, the decision has been made by Canon USA to only participate in 2010 trade shows and events that have the broadest reach.' PMA 2010 takes place from 21-23 February 2010, at the Anaheim Convention Center in southern California. We understand that neither Canon UK nor Canon Japan will be attending the event.

THE AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER  
SOME CRITICISMS OF THE EXHIBITIONS.  
THE "LIFE STUDY," "THE FUZZYGRAPH," AND "THE UNDER-EXPOSED."  
BY BERNARD SHAW

IT is impossible to contemplate the Salon walls without condoling with Mr. Steichen on the conflict between Art and popular prudence. The camera can represent flesh so superbly that, if I dared, I would never photograph a figure without asking that figure to take its clothes off. I delight in mankind as nature makes it, and take such a moderate interest in mere garments that my tailor, though an irreproachable artist, has positively had to change his name to avoid the public discredit of my callous abuse of his masterpieces. It is monstrous that custom should force us to display our faces ostentatiously, however worn and wrinkled and mean they may be, whilst carefully concealing all our other points, however shapely and well-preserved. But the avenger has come in the person of the photographer. The photographer's model, knowing that her face is the only part of her person by which she can be identified, hides that, and displays the rest recklessly. The method of concealment adopted by one of Mr. Steichen's sitters is to bury her face in a cat coiled up on the floor, thereby, of course, throwing into the most extravagant prominence those contours the very existence of which is conventionally regarded as a deplorable indiscretion of Providence, to be kept a guilty secret at all hazards. The

Amateur Photographer  
This week in...

1902

Literary giant George Bernard Shaw was drafted in to comment on Steichen's life studies and other photographs of the day. He questioned why Steichen's monochrome images were all made, it seemed, in 'coal cellars'. 'What I do know is that those impressionists who were not "open artists" resorted to the coal cellar because it abolished local colour, the truth being that they could not at first get the "values" they aimed at except in monochrome.' Writing in AP's 16 October 1902 issue, Bernard Shaw added: 'But local colour is not expected from the photographer. Monochrome is conceded to him as completely as to a copperplate engraver... Mr Steichen starts with Brown, and gets no further than brown. And the parts of his figures which are obscure do not produce the effect of being obscured by darkness; they suddenly become indistinct and insubstantial in a quite unconvincing and unreasonable way.'



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# Review

Your guide to the latest photography books, exhibitions and websites



BOTH PICTURES © STEVE YOUNG

## Book Review

### Photographing Garden Wildlife

By Marianne Taylor and Steve Young

New Holland, hardback, 128 pages, £14.99, ISBN 978-1-84773-486-0

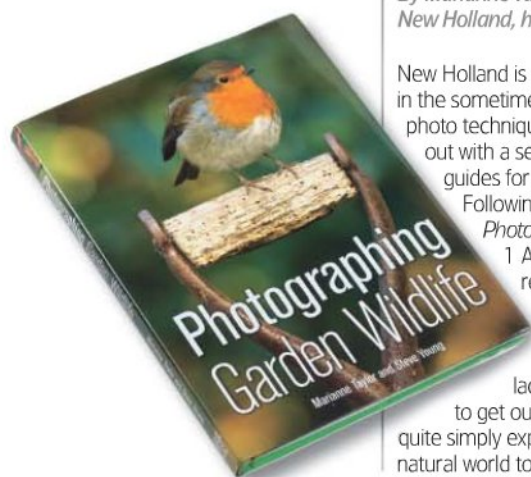
New Holland is proving its mettle in the sometimes staid market of photo technique books by coming out with a series of innovative guides for simple everyday use. Following its *Creative Bird Photography* title (see AP 1 August), the publisher releases *Photographing Garden Wildlife*, which, like its predecessor, is simply brilliant. If you lack a car or the time to get out to nature, this guide quite simply explains how to bring the natural world to you. For those with

typical gardens, stone gardens, large gardens or no garden at all, the authors easily explain how to lure mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and even fungi to your home. The authors set out photo projects to suggest ways to experiment. What really impressed me, however, was the section on how to take garden photos with your mobile phone camera. Have you ever seen this in a photography book? I know I haven't, and kudos to the authors.

Jeff Meyer



## Exhibition





## Book Review

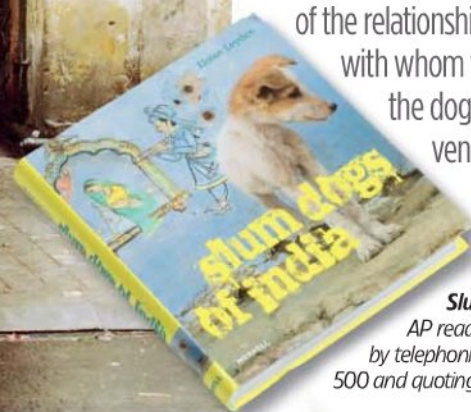
# Slum Dogs of India

By Eloise Leyden

Merrell, paperback, 224 pages, £9.95, ISBN 978-1-8589-4504-0

While this is certainly a book designed for animal lovers, it should appeal to fans of documentary photography as well. Travelling for a year around India, photographer Eloise Leyden became fascinated by the large population of stray dogs that roam the subcontinent's cities in search of food. Instead of focusing on maximum cuteness, though, Leyden has highlighted something much more poignant: the dogs' shared struggle for survival with their human cohabitants. Much of *Slum Dogs of India* is a study of the relationship between the stray canines and the humans with whom they share the streets. Intimate portraits of the dogs interacting with homeless people, street vendors, workers and children at play are the real gems here, and make it much more than a cute animal picture book. **Jeff Meyer**

*Slum Dogs of India* (Merrell) is available to AP readers at the special price of £7.95 (inc p&sp) by telephoning Marston Book Services on 01235 465 500 and quoting the reference MPMERSDA



## Website

[www.chrisfriel.co.uk](http://www.chrisfriel.co.uk)

The saying 'less is more' certainly applies to Chris Friel's website. On opening the home page, a single dark, unnerving image of a lonely house confronts you. There is no accompanying text, no captions to explain the context of the image, just the image itself, exposed in all its powerful drama.

Kent-based Chris, who is a sound recordist by trade, has been taking pictures for three years. He came to our attention after he submitted a selection of images to the AP Gallery. With our interest aroused by his eerie black & white images of lone houses and sole figures disappearing into misty expanses, we decided to see what else he had to offer on his website – and we were not disappointed. There are eight galleries in total, each showcasing a number of monochrome landscapes and portraits. In one portfolio wild horses charge across barren moors, while in another, children appear against ominous skies. Chris's distinctive photographic style – muted tones with areas of high-contrast light and shade – gives his images a supernatural and sinister quality. The simple subject matter and uncluttered approach to composition draw the viewer into a world that appears familiar, yet by the same token strange and alien.

There is no text on the website apart from the date of each image, and the omission of a biography means we don't know anything about the photographer (except that he was shortlisted in last year's Take a View landscape competition), but this only adds to the intrigue. Highly reflective and quietly intense, Chris's images pack a silent punch. Look out for an interview with Chris in a forthcoming issue of AP.

**Gemma Padley**


## The Cleveland Coast

By Charles Twist

Until 27 October. Sue & Steve Photography, 'The Gallery' Guisborough, 16b Fountain Street, Guisborough, North Yorkshire TS14 6PP. Open Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm and Sat 9am-2pm. Tel: 07746 654 726. Website: [www.sueandstevephotography.com](http://www.sueandstevephotography.com). Admission free

Charles Twist has contributed to AP on several occasions, most recently in AP 29 August where he shared his tips on how to track down and create the perfect panoramic landscape. His latest exhibition focuses solely on the picturesque coastal landscapes of Cleveland in the north-east of England. Taking the historic coastline from Middlesbrough to Whitby as his inspiration, Charles's images explore the unique geography and natural beauty of this stretch of the UK. Speaking in the press release about why he chose this area for the project, Charles expressed an interest in exploring the industrial heritage and history of the coastline and its role in producing alum and iron ore.

'The show relates the effect of industry on our landscape and how we have created havens of tranquillity for ourselves,' he says. 'Now the fishing industry has subsided, we can enjoy pretty villages such as Staithes, for example. The photographs demonstrate that the coast's natural beauty can shine through once again.'

The selection of colour images on display includes richly coloured cliff views, an array of flora and fauna and intricate shoreline patterns, in an exhibition that aims to 'bring together the natural and the man-made in a unique voyage of discovery'. **Gemma Padley**



© CHARLES TWIST



# Letters

## Letter of the week

wins a 20-roll pack of 36-exposure Fujifilm Superia ISO 200 35mm film or a Fujifilm 4GB media card (in a choice of CompactFlash, SD or Memory Stick)\*. The sender of every letter published receives a free roll of Fujifilm Superia ISO 200 36-exposure film worth £4.99



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### Feeling chuffed

Leon Bingham's letter (*Learning the ropes*, AP 19 September) conveyed an infectious enthusiasm for his new-found abilities in the area of digital development that surely produced many empathic smiles in addition to mine. I sense that we share the view that most of the work in photography happens before the shutter is pressed, but that the 'development' stage has a wonderful capacity to rescue those shots that would be great, if only they had come out properly exposed, or with the right colour balance and so on. The recent series in AP has been very helpful. Somehow, it seems to be a rule in street/life photography that the best shots are those suddenly grabbed, without time to prepare camera settings, and that those carefully prepared and bracketed are lacking. I fear it is the snob in me that, when faced with the critical moment, will not turn that little knob to the green rectangle (perhaps I should take things gradually, and try turning the dial to P).

My 'always with me' camera is still a compact that only produces JPEG files and I, too, had for a long time struggled with images in which the colour temperature was off. I, too, did not realise that Adobe Camera Raw could open such files, but I had found another answer to the problem, which does not necessitate opening ACR, in Elements 6, at least. Working, as I suspect most people do, in the Full Edit mode, I would spend ages with the colour manipulation functions and the different channels in Levels, rarely achieving a satisfactory result. That is until I clicked for the first time on the Quick Edit option. There, down with the colour saturation slider, is another, specifically for colour temperature. Having used it to quickly correct what had been such a lengthy problem before, I returned to the Full Edit mode, where it became clear from the History palette that two or three different functions had been used to make the corrections to the colour balance of the image with this one slider. I felt very chuffed that day.

**Dr David Perrotta, Hertfordshire**



### Police, camera, action

I've sent a picture just in case you're collecting any in support of the 'photography is not a crime' campaign. This policeman was happy to have his photo taken in front of a very public building, the National Gallery in London.

**Lawrie Phipps, West Yorkshire**

### Notable omission

I was rather surprised to find in the recent *Street challenge* in AP 19 September the notable omission of the bridge camera. I know that DSLRs are a lot cheaper nowadays and come with a lot of typical bridge features, but as the test of the D300 proved they are still pretty large. Don't get me wrong, though; I appreciate that DSLRs offer better quality, but sometimes a smaller camera would be a better option.

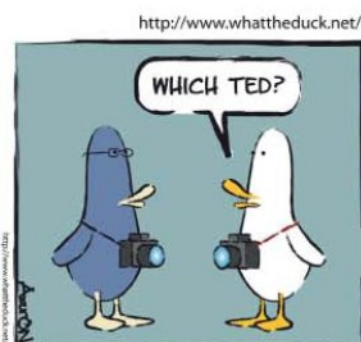
In each of the cameras used, there was at least one missing feature that a bridge would have covered. For starters, it is small. Then there's the super-wide telephoto zoom, a flip-out LCD and image stabilisation. I have just bought a used Canon PowerShot S3 IS and love the screen and the excellent image/video quality. Naturally, the newer models are now more advanced. Of the current bridge cameras, I believe the Canon PowerShot SX1 IS and PowerShot SX10 IS, Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX1 and Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ38 would be fantastic choices. They all sport image stabilisation, up to 20x zooms and HD video and, apart from the FZ38, adjustable LCDs. Add to that their compactness, and you have a fantastic street camera.

**Lawrence Chadwick-Smith, Denbighshire**

### What am I missing?

I have just finished reading your review of the Nikon D300s (AP 26 September) and I found it very informative. However, you mention that in competition with this camera the Pentax K-7 was 'compelling, if flawed', but nowhere in your article could I find anything to qualify this remark. It has left me perplexed, as I cannot think what this terrible flaw might be. When comparing the reviews of the two cameras (the Pentax K-7 was tested in AP 15 August), I would have to say that the

### What The Duck



Write to Letters, Amateur Photographer, IPC Media, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU  
fax to 020 3148 8130 or email to [amateurphotographer@ipcmedia.com](mailto:amateurphotographer@ipcmedia.com)

\* Please indicate whether you would like to receive Fujifilm film or a memory card (please state type preferred) and include your full postal address





## Access all areas

Regarding Barney Britton's article on performance photography (AP 5 September) and reader Mike Bowman's letter (AP 26 September), I cannot emphasise too strongly that almost all ticketed venues allow photography only by photographers licensed to do so for each event. The paying public has to be protected against the wrong kind of photography, and this is done by issuing press (or photo) passes to carefully selected applicants.

If you're looking for a pass, contact the organisers or the PR company for the event. You'll be asked searching questions about your credentials, NUJ membership perhaps, your publication record (what, when, where), and for samples of your work in this field. You must state where your pictures will be published, including websites, magazines, newspapers and so on, and you must supply photo ID. If successful, you must follow a strict code of absolute courtesy and discretion. All shots must be sent to the organisers, usually on a DVD.

Most venues are overloaded with applications and you can't expect

to be chosen without a solid background of success in relevant fields. You can build that background by selecting magazines in the field you intend to target. Study their format and their picture policy, and keep submitting imaginative and catchy photos. You're up against hardened professionals so your technical proficiency must be near-perfect. Eventually, you should get a few pictures published. From there, go on to ask that magazine (preferably many more than one) to back your application for a press pass.

That's it: good luck! As an amateur I've been shooting for years at exhibitions, night clubs, specialist venues and events, and it's terrific fun, very instructive and a tough introduction to the realities of photographic life.

**Ronald Walford, Kent**

**I'm fascinated by 'the wrong kind of photography', Mr Walford. These rules may well apply to major national venues, but there are thousands that offer far easier access – Damien Demolder, Editor**

K-7 was the better camera – or have I missed something between the lines?  
**Pete Lane, Anglesey**

**When I described the K-7 as 'compelling, if flawed', the 'flaws' that I was referring to are primarily those related to its autofocus system, which lags some way behind that offered by the Nikon D300s both in terms of versatility and, in some conditions, accuracy. The K-7 offers a better AF system than the cameras that preceded it, but AF accuracy is not as high as it could be when off-centre AF points are used. The Pentax system is also very short on 'SSW' lenses, which, as well as being silent, offer**

**a considerable increase in AF speed over those which rely on the K-7's built-in motor – Barney Britton, technical writer**

## Delighted!

I just wanted to say how delighted I am that you have featured my photograph of my wife with our three family spaniels in *Appraisal* in AP 3 October. I very much appreciate your constructive comments and will bear these in mind for future shots. I am sure you will appreciate, however, that getting three lively dogs in the right position and with the right expression is not easy, and I had to work very quickly to get a good shot.

**Colin Webb, West Midlands**

## Back Chat

AP reader **Andy Rice** praises the virtues of the compact digital camera

**T**O Steve Gosling, for his article on 'How to get the best from a... digital compact' in AP 18 July, I'd like to say: 'well said!' My first-ever 'compact' was a 35mm Ricoh 500GX rangefinder, which, for its time, was amazingly well specified. Used in conjunction with Ilford Pan F film it gave me outstandingly sharp pictures. This was due in no small measure to its precise rangefinder focusing and leaf shutter, which thankfully lacked the 'clunk' of an SLR mirror – something I've always believed had a small but significant effect on critical sharpness.

If my little Ricoh was well specified, then my latest acquisition – a second-hand Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ8 (£45 at a camera fair) – is doubly so. I love its small SLR design and loads of features. I'm still a film buff, but I've warmed to instantly reviewing my shots, the impressive pulling power of the Panasonic's 36-432mm Leica lens, and the quality of my printed images.

The digital compact's excessive noise levels that Steve Gosling spoke of are very apparent at anything above ISO 200, but as I can get such fine quality using the lowest setting of ISO 100 it seems daft to use any other speed, even if it does mean using a

**In the past few weeks I've used my little Panasonic for landscapes, portraits and even some close-ups of birds**

tripod. Like Steve said, why have such fine quality available if you don't make full use of it? The image-stabilisation feature in many compacts is also a real plus, although it's no substitute for a tripod when working in low light. A great advantage of my 'superzoom' compact is apparent when shooting street candids. I

can stand a good distance away from my subjects and get frame-filling shots without them ever being aware of it. Even if I'm spotted, who'd believe a photographer standing so far away using a small compact camera was really taking their picture?

Depending on the cost and specification of a digital compact, however, I don't agree with Steve Gosling's suggestion that it is important to fill the frame in order to keep post-process cropping to a minimum. I quite often blow up sections of my images, which, despite the 7MP sensor, still allows excellent quality. My usual camera is a 35mm Pentax or my beloved Pentax 6x7, but I'm finding it increasingly difficult to put down my little Panasonic. In the past few weeks I've used it for landscapes, portraits and even managed some decent close-ups of birds.

Yes, today's digital compacts are amazing. Small, versatile and a doddle to carry – particularly when you're used to a heavy bag filled with 35mm medium-format gear. Steve Gosling recommends we realise the potential of our digital compacts. Compared to many of the film compacts of years ago, the potential of the digital compact is quite awesome.

Your thoughts or views (about 500 words) should be sent to 'Backchat' at the usual AP address (see page 3). A fee of £50 will be paid on publication



## The AP experts

Each week, one of our team of experts of Steve Bloom, David Clapp, Tom Mackie and Clive Nichols will reveal the secrets behind one of their great images. This week it's Steve Bloom

### STEVE BLOOM Wildlife

The world's leading wildlife photographer is bringing his expertise to AP. Steve has written dozens of books on wildlife photography



Amateur  
Photographer  
Technique

# Photo Insight

**STEVE BLOOM** EXPLAINS HOW HE USED A LOW CAMERA ANGLE TO MAKE THIS EMPEROR PENGUIN LOOM LARGE IN THE FRAME

**P**ENGUINS tend to be inquisitive creatures and this emperor penguin in Antarctica was no exception. I had been out on the ice photographing the emperor colonies when this penguin waddled straight up to me. Emperor penguins are one of the larger breeds and are incredibly hardy. They huddle together during the harsh winters when the temperatures can drop to  $-60^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

On this particular trip I was photographing during the height of summer. We had to take an icebreaker to reach the penguins, and they were quite difficult to get to. When the ice became too dense for the icebreaker, a helicopter took us the rest of the way.

It is possible to get fairly close to the penguin colonies, although it's important to keep a bit of distance so as not to frighten them. You have to be calm and relaxed when

approaching any animal; if your behaviour is non-threatening, the animal will be more at ease and you can produce better images. With wildlife photography it is a case of being cautiously persistent in your approach. You also have to learn to work quickly. Everything changes incredibly fast so you have to act with a certain amount of instinct.

I find penguins so humanlike: it's the way they carry themselves, with their chests puffed out and their wings looking like arms. It is easy to view them in an anthropomorphic way. This penguin looked as though he was master of his own destiny. I wanted to show the penguin's sense of belonging – this is his territory – so I positioned him on the left-hand side of the composition looking across the frame. There was a wonderful iceberg in the distance, which I incorporated into my shot. Without the iceberg the





BOH PICTURES © STEVE BLOOM

## “I believe animals do have an appreciation of the world around and I try to portray this”

composition wouldn't have been as strong because there would have been too much empty space.

I used a 24–70mm lens with my Canon EOS-1Ds for this image. My camera was set to centreweighted metering and I worked in aperture priority mode. I was fairly close to the penguin, so I was shooting quite wide at a mid-focal length of 42mm. I had a range of lenses with me, but the wideangle lens was best because of my close proximity to the subject. If I'd used a longer lens I would have had to move further back; the penguin would have been smaller in the frame and the iceberg would have become the focus instead, which wasn't what I wanted. I was quite low down for this

shot. Choosing a low shooting angle and looking up at the animal helps to give a sense of the penguin's actual size. By making the penguin loom large in the frame, I tried to portray a sense of the penguin's character.

I often see people photographing children from eye level, looking down at the child to take the picture. If you want to show what it is like to be a child, you have to photograph from their point of view. This means getting down to their eye level. The same approach applies with animals, as you have to think, 'How do I position myself so I can connect with my subject?' It's not about using your zoom lens to get in close, but rather physically moving yourself to a shooting angle that



## Talking technique

When you are close to your subject and using a wideangle lens, it is possible to make an animal look large and more lifelike in the frame. If you are shooting from below your subject looking up, as I have done in the image on the left, think about how much background you want to include in your composition. Shooting with a wideangle lens means you can show more of the surroundings and give the viewer a sense of the animal in its environment.

I have included a substantial proportion of the sky and horizon in the main image, and made a feature of background subjects – the rock on the left and the iceberg. I used less of a low angle for my image of a pair of penguins (above) and chose not to include the horizon in the frame. Instead, I used the snow to create a completely white backdrop. I was also further away and used a longer 70–200mm zoom lens. When you compare the two images you can see the difference altering your camera angle can make and the importance of taking time to think about how to use the background to frame your subject.

will give you the strongest possible composition. The most important element is the eyes. You don't want to be looking down to the eyes; you want to be level with them.

It is also important to catch the light in the subject's eyes to bring the picture to life. On this occasion I was able to catch a glint from the sun, which made the penguin's eyes sparkle. Without that sparkle there would be a mass of black and the eyes wouldn't be visible at all.

During the Antarctic summer, there is daylight for 24 hours. I took this image at midnight when the sun is at its lowest. Low light is ideal for wildlife photography, and because the light is low throughout the day you can photograph at almost any time. Even when the sky is overcast there is still plenty of available light. On this occasion the sun was shining bright and the light was reflected from the snow. The clouds acted as a giant softbox helping to diffuse the light, which helped to avoid overblown highlights. I had my tripod with me, but I shot handheld using a shutter speed of 1/1250sec at f/9.

This image appeared in my book *Spirit of the Wild*, and in the book every image has an accompanying quotation that emphasises the importance of protecting wildlife and the natural world. The quote alongside this image reads: 'I think to myself: what a wonderful world',

from the famous song sung by Louis Armstrong. The penguin looked as though he had been thinking just that. I do believe that animals have an appreciation for the world around them and I always try to portray this sense of animal sentience in my wildlife pictures. I want my images to evoke feelings of compassion and empathy. I hope I've created an image that people look at and think what a magnificent world we live in. **AP**



To see more images by **Steve Bloom** visit [www.stevebloomphoto.com](http://www.stevebloomphoto.com). Steve's book *Spirit of the Wild*, published by Thames & Hudson, is priced £18.95 and is available from [www.stevebloomshop.com](http://www.stevebloomshop.com)

As part of **Amateur Photographer's 125th anniversary celebrations**, Steve is hosting a wildlife photography seminar on 14 October 2009. For more information visit [www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/features](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/features) or call 0203 148 4321



# The last resort

Firework displays are challenging subjects, but you can rescue a disappointing set of pictures by combining them in software. **Barney Britton** shows you how

**Technique explained** Perfect fireworks



**Amateur  
Photographer**  
Software  
solutions

## Before you start

### Software

Adobe Photoshop CS/2/3/4 or similar (layers support essential)

### System requirements

Windows PC or Mac

Skill required ●●●●●

Time to complete 30 minutes

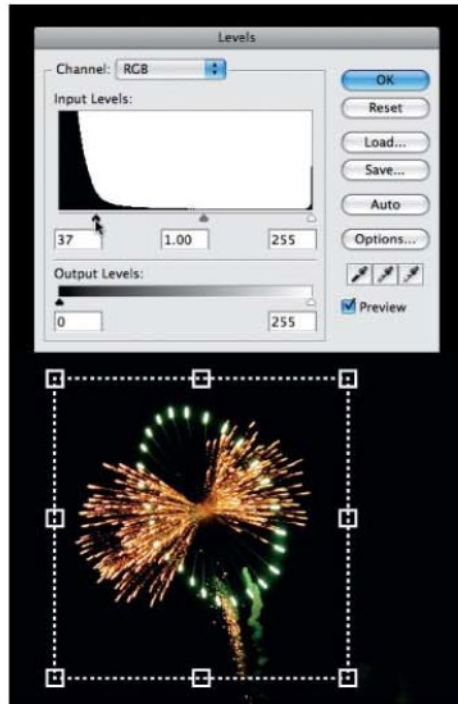
**F**IREWORK shows are great fun, but they're tricky to photograph. With the exception of the biggest events, there aren't normally that many fireworks exploding in the air at any given time. It's easy to get a series of acceptable images, but very difficult to get a single shot that captures the grandeur of the entire show. Also, exposure is complicated: should you expose for the crowd in the foreground or for the fireworks? Ideally, you would capture both elements on a single frame, but this is easier said than done. I shot a fireworks show last year, and although I got decent images of the fireworks themselves and the crowd in the foreground, I didn't manage to get the shot I wanted, with everything in it.

However, all is not lost, as on these pages I'll show you how to combine several separate images, of both fireworks and a foreground element, to create a single dramatic image.

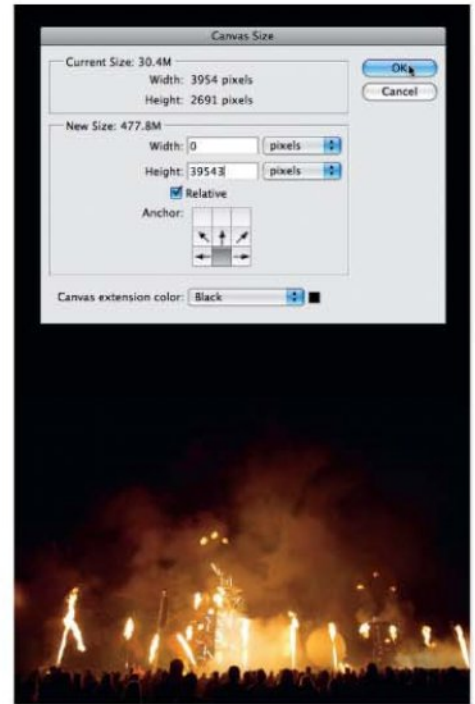




**1** Shoot the images. Here, I've taken a shot of the crowd and several shots of individual fireworks exploding in the sky. A tripod is essential for all these images. For the fireworks, a bulb exposure from the moment of the firework being released to the moment it explodes should give you good results with a little experimentation. Shoot wide to make sure you get the entire burst in the frame as you can always crop later.



**2** Once you're back inside in the warm with your pictures, you need to prepare them. First, crop the fireworks shots to get rid of any extra background. Next, open the Levels tool (Ctrl+L) and pull in the left-hand slider while holding down the Alt key to make sure that the remaining background to all the fireworks pictures is pure black.



**3** My crowd scene is in the landscape format, so I've added extra 'sky' (Image>Canvas Size) at the top of the picture by extending the image vertically using a background colour of black.



**4** Now we're ready to overlay the firework bursts onto the background. All you need to do is drag each image of fireworks onto the background layer using the Move tool (shortcut key: V). For each image you drag onto the background, a new layer will be created. Don't worry about positioning the images yet.



**5** You'll notice that with the Layers blending mode set to Normal, your fireworks images overlap one another. This is easily fixed. Change the Blending Mode on each layer to Lighten and the black sky behind the fireworks will effectively become transparent, allowing each of the layers to show through. Once this is done, you can manipulate each layer individually without masking any of the others.



**6** Arrange the bursts of fireworks in the pattern that you want, and when you've finished flatten the image (Layer>Flatten Image) to get rid of all the separate layers. Save the image, and then sit back and admire the results of your hard work.



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### AF-S NIKKOR LENSES

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### AF MICRO-NIKKOR LENSES

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85mm f/1.4D AF IF	£875.00
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# Play misty for me



**Colin Varndell** explains why misty mornings can rejuvenate

your landscapes and how to anticipate the ideal conditions

**W**INTER mist can add an eerie, atmospheric quality to an otherwise ordinary landscape view, with commonplace trees and hills suddenly poking up out of a sea of fog. Such conditions frequently occur at dawn at this time of year and last through to mid-winter because day and night-time temperatures contrast dramatically. This

disparity causes condensation to develop, as warm, moisture-laden air near the ground meets colder air from above and turns to water droplets. The resulting mist or fog is most often seen in river valleys where cold air currents meet moist air from the river and any low-lying areas nearby. It is unlikely that many (if indeed any) photographers are not inspired and captivated by such drama at dawn when the sun just breaks over the horizon.

## Before you go

The three essential ingredients for successful misty morning photographs are reconnaissance, preparation and patience. Explore your own locality to establish





where mist is most likely to occur. A high viewpoint with a view east towards the rising sun will provide the best opportunities for capturing the contrast of the mist draped across the landscape in early morning light. Study Ordnance Survey maps for possible viewpoints and visit them to check out the compositional potential beforehand. Look east for possible strong features like buildings, trees or hills. A river or stream in your view will certainly add to the potential.

Be familiar with local weather patterns so you know the sort of conditions that are most likely to produce mist. Keep a careful eye on weather forecasts, but remember that they are not always right! Understanding the weather in any given

**An early morning shot from one of the hills west of the village of Beaminster in west Dorset**

Nikon D200,  
250mm, 1/160sec  
at f/11, ISO 100

locality comes down to a combination of studying Met Office reports together with your own local knowledge.

Don't wait until you see a foggy dawn to reach for your camera. You need to be there waiting for it, as the magical effect of mist in the landscape will not last long. Check the weather at bedtime the night before, and if there are stars you could be in with a chance. Ideal conditions occur when a cold, clear night follows a wet day. Get your gear ready to go the night before and make sure your camera is set at likely settings. Check the sunrise time and calculate how long it will take to get to your destination, then set your alarm clock to give you plenty of time. You will need to be at your chosen

spot at least ten minutes before sunrise.

Luckily for us, sunrise is not too early during mid-winter. When my alarm goes off on a potential misty morning I jump from my bed and look at the sky for stars and then check for wind. If it's breezy, I go back to bed and hit the snooze button, as even a gentle wind will kill any mist.

**Taking the shot**

Make sure you shoot at low ISO settings because noise can be most unforgiving in the subtle tones of mist. Backlit mist can also fool your camera's meter into underexposure, so you may need to compensate for this by adding at least one more stop of light. You can



**There is a strong blue colour across the landscape prior to dawn. As the sun rises this will change to pink or orange**

Nikon F100, 500mm, 1sec at f/8, Fujichrome Provia 100

**This was shot into the rising sun at daybreak. The orange hue only lasts for a few minutes before fading to the colours of the light of day**

Nikon F100, 500mm, 1/60sec at f/5.6, Fujichrome Velvia 50







ALL PICTURES © COLIN WARDILL

**A wideangle focal length helped emphasise the depth of the scene of cobwebs draped over gorse bushes on a winter morning**

Nikon D200, 18mm, 1/6sec at f/22, ISO 100

**The grainy texture of this misty landscape was helped by ISO 400 on a Nikon D2x**

Nikon D2x, 400mm, 1/30sec at f/5.6, ISO 100



➡ achieve this by either dialling in +1EV or by selecting a slower shutter speed or a larger aperture.

Telephoto lenses (or the long end of decent zoom lenses) are the most ideal for this sort of landscape photography. For maximum contrast you will almost certainly be shooting into the light. Carry an A4 card to shield the lens from the sun to prevent flare from fogging up your images. You can achieve this by setting your composition and using the self-timer function, then moving around your tripod-mounted camera to hold the card up to shade the front element of the lens before the shutter trips.

Be prepared for colour shifts at dawn. Before the sun rises, your scene may have

a strong blue cast. As the sun breaks the horizon, the colours will be influenced by pink, red or yellow. Gradually, these golden hues will fade into the light of day.

Often, mist may occur in certain areas of the landscape and be totally absent in

“Your best chance for mist occurs when a cold clear night follows a wet day”

**The rising sun in this shot was hidden behind tree trunks to prevent flare**

Nikon F801, 24mm, 1/4sec at f/8, Fujichrome Velvia 50

others. Longer lenses will be able to isolate portions of the landscape and pick out the most photogenic misty areas.

Sometimes the mist can rise quickly to form a haze where distant hills and shapes appear like cardboard cutouts, becoming progressively fainter as they recede into the distance. This is often referred to as aerial perspective and offers further opportunities. These conditions require at least three or more receding layers of hills and are best shot with a long lens that gives the appearance of compressing the perspective and emphasising the phenomenon.

If you don't live in a hilly area go into the mist to look for woodland shots with trees fading into the fog. Search for strong





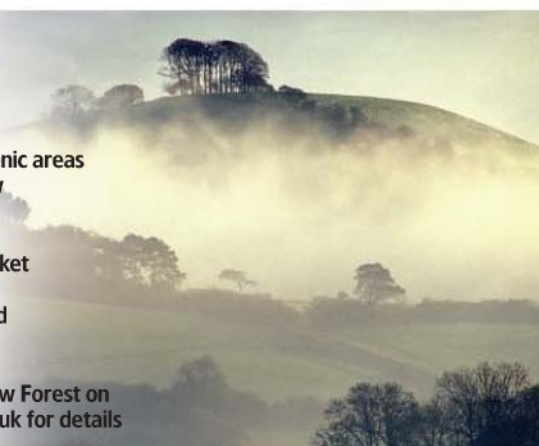
foreground shapes to anchor your shots. Alternatively, go for macro details in mist-like cobwebs or dew-laden insects and leaves. The early morning light in fog is usually soft and diffused, and therefore perfect for exposing delicate details.

Mist photography requires both determination and patience. The opportunities in mist are often brief and you can run out of mist before you exhaust all your own ideas. It is certainly best to go out on a regular basis and not to expect to get superb results every time. If you get a good shot one morning, don't leave it at that. It is often worth returning to favourite viewpoints again and again as the effects of mist are never exactly the same twice. **AP**

## Colin's top tips

- Check out potential viewpoints beforehand
- Be there waiting before it happens
- Use a long lens to pick out the most photogenic areas
- Use a sturdy tripod, as light levels will be low
- Carry a cable or electronic release
- Shoot into the light for maximum contrast
- Keep a spare camera battery in a breast pocket
- Return time and again to favourite spots
- Your best chance for mist occurs when a cold clear night follows a wet day

Colin is running an autumn workshop in the New Forest on Friday 30 October. Visit [www.colinvarndell.co.uk](http://www.colinvarndell.co.uk) for details







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### PRINTER INK CARTRIDGES



## EPSON

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T009 Colour	£24.46 66ml	£4.89 70ml, 3 for £13.70	Photo 900, 1270, 1290
T026 Black	£19.56 16ml	£3.90 20ml, 3 for £10.75	Photo 810, 830, 830u, 925, 935
T027 Colour	£19.56 46ml	£4.89 50ml, 3 for £13.70	Photo 810, 830, 830u, 925, 935
T036 Black	£9.78 10ml	£3.90 13ml, 3 for £10.75	C42, C44, C46
T037 Colour	£11.73 25ml	£4.89 31ml, 3 for £13.70	C42, C44, C46
T040 Black	£19.56 17ml	£3.90 20ml, 3 for £10.75	C62, CX3200
T041 Colour	£19.56 37ml	£4.89 48ml, 3 for £13.70	C62, CX3200
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T0334/5/6, each	£14.67 17ml	£4.89 21ml, 3 for £13.70	Photo 950, 960
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T0594/5/6, each	£11.73 13ml	Check Website.	Photo R2400
T0597/7/8, each	£11.73 13ml	Check Website.	Photo R2400
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T0961-969 Set of 8	£77.99	Not Available.	Photo R2880
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T0964/5/6, each	£9.78 11.4ml	Not Available.	Photo R2880
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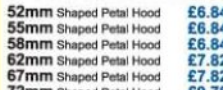
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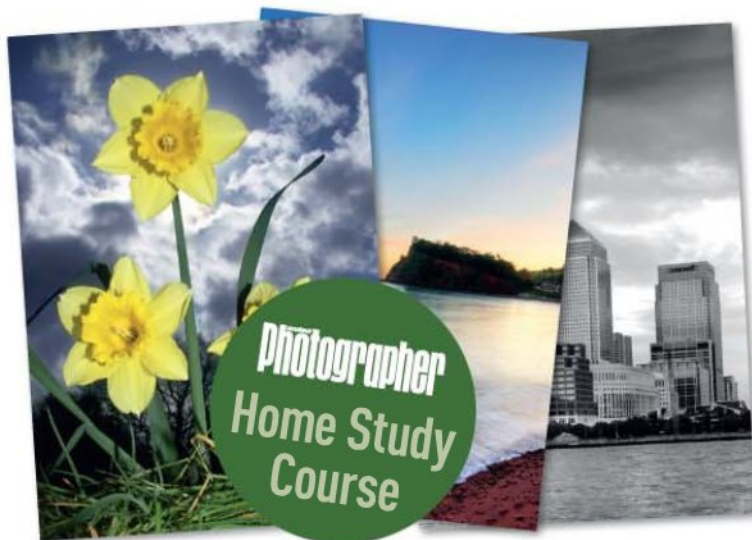
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AP SP - 17 OCT 2009





# From the ground up

Digital imaging makes it easier than ever to produce quality images, so why bother setting up your own location shoot? Photographer **Oliver Prout** says there are plenty of reasons to build your own set and design a lighting setup to suit. **Gemma Padley** went to find out what he does and why





**O**LIVER Prout likes to do things the hard way. Well, that's not entirely true. While he doesn't deliberately go out his way to make things complicated for himself, he does believe in doing things properly, and if that means spending weeks planning a shoot, hours hauling lights to a location and standing ankle deep in water all night until he has the shots he wants, then so be it.

As an up-and-coming photographer, Oliver, 28, who lives in South London, regularly contributes photo stories, often fashion-based, to magazines, and has many portrait shoots under his belt. Yet unlike some photographers who may fall back on Photoshop to achieve the images they are after, he meticulously plans his shoots and does everything he can from scratch. Oliver believes that constructing the set and physically creating a composition rather than relying on image-editing software produces more authentic-looking images.

'If you use Photoshop exclusively to create your compositions, the images become rigid and digital looking,' he says. 'Putting the hard graft in at the compositional stage produces images with a more organic feel.'

However, the process of constructing a location shoot is no walk in the park. Working with a stylist, make-up artist

**Telling a story through his photographs is a key consideration for Oliver, who 'storyboards' his images weeks before a shoot**

and assistant, Oliver starts planning six to eight weeks in advance. There are several aesthetic considerations he makes ahead of the shoot, from choosing a model, styling and make-up to other practical concerns, such as deciding a location, lighting design, lens and camera angles. For the series on these pages, Oliver earmarked the location and did a recce, taking pictures and making sketches for reference.

'You can't photograph this ship [see photo on page 27] during the day because the sun is directly behind it, so I had the idea of a night shoot,' he says. 'I thought about how I could include a figure in the scene and gradually came up with a narrative for the series. By physically drawing out your ideas you start to get a sense of what is possible and what is less feasible in reality.'

With his background in film production, Oliver approaches each photo shoot like a film shoot. As a series, his images relay a continuous narrative but individually they also tell their own stories.

'The narrative element gives the images purpose and depth, and makes them more

interesting and engaging for the viewer,' he says. 'A lot of my ideas come from Greek mythology, but I get inspiration from many sources. For this series I was inspired by Pre-Raphaelite paintings and there is a certain fairy tale or ghost story theme running through the images. The girl is meant to be a sea nymph. The storyboard shows the sequence of images – first, where she is emerging from the water, then a selection of images as she tries to save the ship and finally a close up of her tear-streaked face as she realises the ship is lost.'

'The boat and girl have to work together in the composition, and this harmony comes from the narrative. I had to consider the scale of the girl against the ship and where to place her in the frame, and also about my shooting angles. There are a limited number of camera angles from which you can photograph the ship without it looking like a shapeless mass: from the stern [see page 27] and close up [see above right] are two of the best shooting angles. The more you think about the story beforehand, the better equipped you are to execute the shots on the day.'

**By physically drawing out your ideas you start to get a sense of what is possible and what is less feasible in reality**



Before



After



Oliver decides his lighting setup at the storyboard stage. You can see in some of his earliest sketches where he has marked the direction of the light source (see right), but what he plans pre-shoot isn't always how the lighting ends up.

'Your lighting setup inevitably alters as ideas occur to you,' says Oliver. 'There's a fair amount of improvisation on the day. I use motivated light sources, lights from inside the scene itself. I tend to use two-point lighting – a key light and a fill, which loosely replicates sunlight or moonlight to achieve a look that communicates the story and is flattering to the model. I prefer to light my subjects at a three-quarter back and fill angle as it emphasises the subject, separating it from the surroundings. Time constraints meant I mostly used a 2kW tungsten light (also known as a 'blonde') to illuminate an area and play that light source off against the ambient light, but when we had time I created a false moon and motivated my other light sources from that.'

In addition to the 2kW 'blonde' light, Oliver had two 1kW Arri 'Pup' lights, two 500W Par Can lights and three 150W Dedolight lamps with him.

'The Dedolights are small enough to be handheld and can be used to create catchlights in the subject's



## Preparation



**Above:** Oliver sketches out his ideas and works out an initial lighting design ahead of each shoot. **Right:** Setting up the shoot **Top:** Oliver does as much as he can in-camera and uses Photoshop to make small adjustments to his images





eyes,' he says. 'They can be dimmed, although this decreases the colour temperature.' He also used a 3kW generator to power his lights and a 6x6ft (1.8x1.8m) frame with reflector screen to reflect light onto the subject. A 4ft (1.2m) high scaffold tower formed a platform in the lake for the model to stand on. 'If you are an experienced photographer and have the luxury of time, there is every reason to experiment with your lighting, but my advice for photographers starting out is to keep it simple: don't try to introduce off-camera flash or different coloured lights,' he says. 'Decide what lights you are going to use and where to position them and stick to it.'

Once the set was ready and the model in place, the shoot took about four hours to complete. Using his Canon EOS 5D with a 24-105mm lens, Oliver manually calculated his exposure by judging how light he wanted the skin tones to be. He set up his camera on a tripod, but decided to shoot handheld for flexibility. Shooting at a minimum of 1/30sec, Oliver mostly used a shutter speed of 1/60sec at ISO 400. For some of the images he used 2sec exposures. On these occasions a flashgun with a flash exposure of approximately 1/16,000sec was used to freeze the subject and prevent blurring.

It is vital to establish a rapport with the

**“You have to allow the model space to try different things, but ultimately it is up to the photographer to direct the shoot”**

subject in order to achieve natural-looking images, says Oliver. 'You have to allow the model space to try different things, but ultimately it is up to the photographer to direct the shoot,' he adds. 'I tend to pull the poses to see if they'll work – if I can't do a pose, how will my subject? However, there is a danger of directing the subject to the point where the images look wooden, so you have to know when to pull back. I keep shooting until I've captured the model in a pose I'm happy with.'

On average, each shoot takes three days to complete – from hiring and collecting the lights and scaffolding the day before, to the shoot day itself and returning the equipment afterwards. Then there are the additional days spent editing the images.

'For this shoot I took almost 400 exposures,' says Oliver. 'I'll whittle down the shots until I have a few final images. Selecting which images to edit is an absorbing process. You're meant to be doing other things like eating or sleeping, but I can't stop until I have my final selection! Typically, I'll open each raw file in Lightroom

and adjust the exposure, contrast and saturation in much the same way as I used to in the darkroom. I convert the image to a TIFF file and do a basic cosmetic "clean up" in Photoshop. I try to leave the images as un-retouched as possible, although in these images, the riverbanks and modern structures were removed. On this occasion I desaturated the images, but they're not completely black & white – there is still some colour remaining. The brown tones create a sepia appearance.'

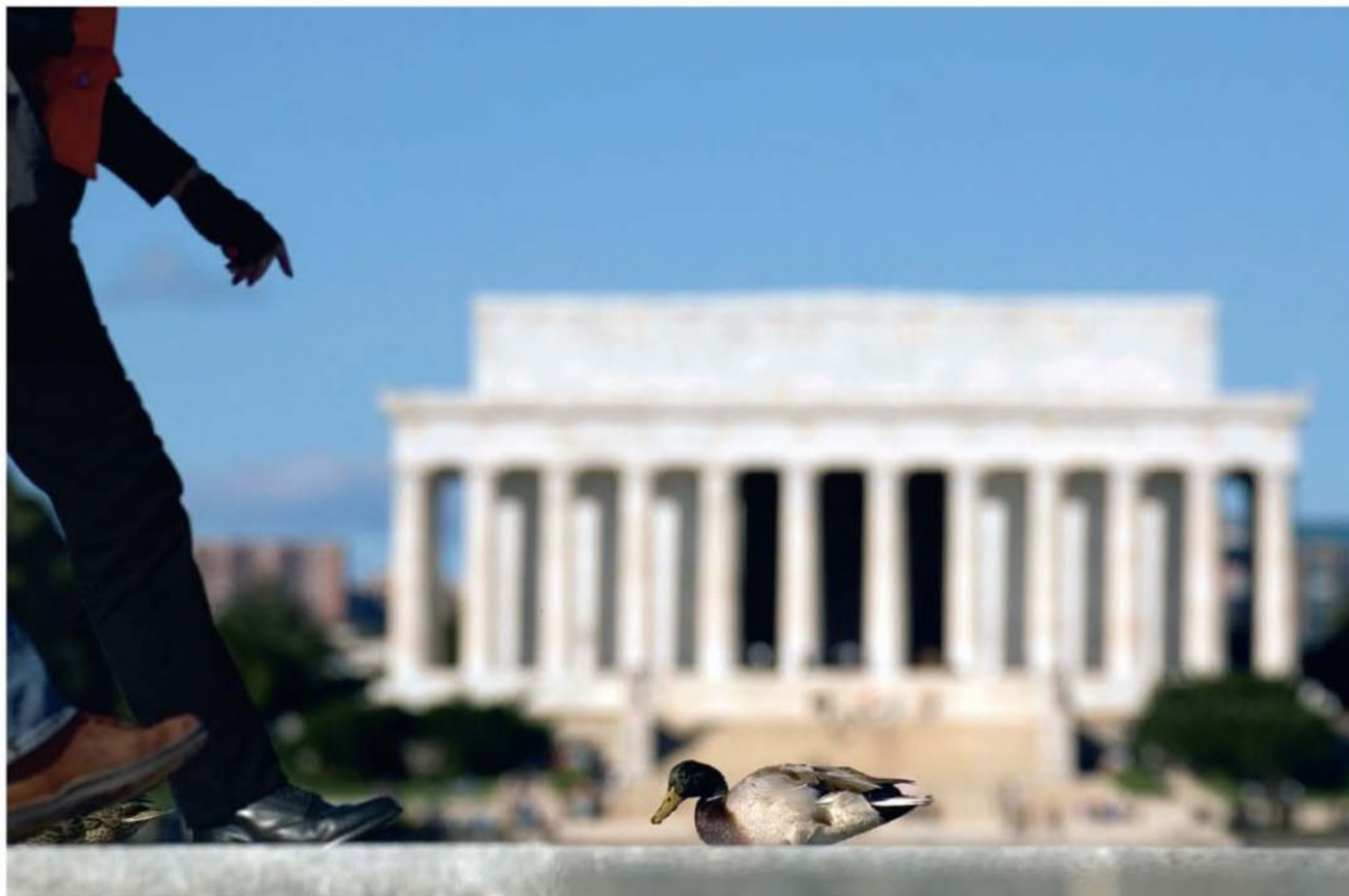
While Oliver hired film lights and went to vast lengths to design and build his set, it is possible to achieve professional-looking images on location without investing an extreme amount of time or money into your project. Something as simple as car headlights work well, and if you are imaginative in your approach you may be surprised at what you can achieve from the ground up. **AP**

**Oliver used a variety of lights – mostly in a key lighting and fill combination – to light his subject**

To see more images by Oliver visit [www.ospphotography.co.uk](http://www.ospphotography.co.uk). In a future issue of AP Richard Sibley explains how to use fill-in light at night.



# SIGMA



## OUR WORLD

**Liz O. Baylen:** Born in 1979. Graduated from Ohio University's School of Visual Communications in 2001 and began working for The Washington Times. She has covered assignments around the world and was selected as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize while with The Washington Times. Most recently, her images have appeared in The New York Times and Los Angeles Times.

Photo data: SIGMA APO 120-400mm F4.5-5.6 DG OS HSM, 1/2500 second at f5.6.



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**Bryce  
McQuillan**  
New Zealand

**Green bell frog**

Strongly contrasting light and shadow  
gives this image a dramatic edge  
Nikon D50, 60mm, 1/200sec at f/11, ISO 200,  
Nikon Speedlight SB-600

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A straight black  
background such as this  
does not always work,  
but in this case it has  
helped Bryce create a really  
striking and quite scary  
photograph. The sidelighting  
adds great drama – Damien Demolder, Editor





## Bryce McQuillan

### New Zealand

Bryce, 22, began taking photographs three years ago and has had no formal photography training. Passionate about insects, a chance meeting with a local nature photographer inspired Bryce to take up photography. He keeps many insects and spiders as pets and dedicates much of his time to finding new species to photograph. 'I'm amazed by the incredible diversity of insects, such as the colours and the way they live,' he says. 'I enjoy macro photography because you see things not visible to the naked eye. The patterns and colours of some insects' bodies are mind blowing.'

#### Small fly

**1** Bryce got down to the fly's eye level to capture its face from an angle that would emphasise its character  
Nikon D90, 60mm, 1/200sec at f/8, ISO 100, Nikon Speedlight SB-600, extension tubes to a length of 90mm

#### Green bell frog

**2** 'I shot this image against a black background to make the frog's face stand out,' says Bryce  
Nikon D50, 60mm macro, 1/200sec at f/11, ISO 200, Nikon Speedlight SB-600

#### Blowfly up close

**3** Bryce took this image to show detail of the fly that is not visible with the naked eye  
Nikon D50, 60mm, 1/200sec at f/11, ISO 200, Nikon Speedlight SB-600, extension tubes to a length of 110mm





### Houseboat

**1** Becky combined three exposures in Photomatix to create this tranquil image  
Nikon D80, 18-200mm, 1/8sec, 1/2sec and 1.8secs at f/22, ISO 100, tripod

### Lighthouse

**2** Becky used HDR for this image of Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset at sunset  
Nikon D80, 18-200mm, 1.8secs, 8secs and 28secs at f/22, ISO 100, ND grad filter

### Beach view

**3** Shell Bay in Dorset  
Nikon D80, 18-200mm, 10secs and 30secs at f/22 combined in Photomatix, ISO 100, ND grad filter, tripod



## Becky Stares Dorset

Becky has always enjoyed taking 'snaps', but it was only when she invested in a Nikon D40 two years ago that her interest in photography took off. 'I started taking photographs of everything and anything in a bid to improve my technical ability,' says Becky. 'I love photographing sunsets as the colours are amazing and change so quickly. I like the idea of capturing these fleeting moments to share with others.'





## Chris Cupit Bedfordshire

Chris, 36, was introduced to photography by his dad who ran a photography lab. His favourite photographic subjects are water and milk droplets. 'I love the idea of freezing a moment in time that happens all around us,' he says. To create a stream of water droplets, Chris uses a Mariotte siphon made from a water bottle and two straws held in place with kitchen tongs. He controls the speed of the droplets by raising and lowering the bottle. Chris photographed these subjects in a darkroom, firing his flash (set to a low power) manually, the brief flash duration of 1/20,000sec effectively freezing the movement. The images were taken using a Vivitar flash, Varipower Module and tripod. To find out how Chris creates his images visit <http://drippy2009.blogspot.com>





### Milk splash... 1

1 Chris dropped milk onto blue and green-dyed Perspex  
Canon EOS 450D, 100mm macro, 2.5secs at f/16, ISO 100

### Green water splash

2 A green paper background gives the composition a green colour cast  
Canon EOS 450D, 100mm macro, 2.5secs at f/16, ISO 200

### Milk splash... 2

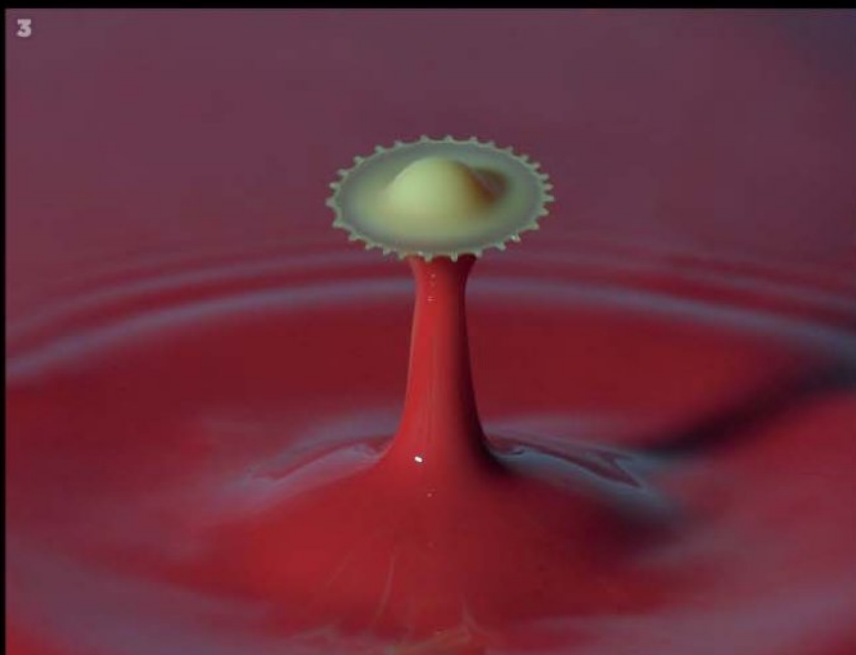
3 Yellow and red dye add contrast  
Canon EOS 450D, 100mm macro, 2secs at f/16, ISO 100

### Milk splash... 3

4 Blue dye was used for this shot  
Canon EOS 450D, 100mm macro, 2secs at f/16, ISO 200

### Milk splash... 4

5 A snoot was used to direct light  
Canon EOS 450D, 55mm, 2secs at f/16, ISO 100



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# Appraisal

## How to submit your pictures

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Send your photographs to 'Appraisal' at our usual address (see page 3). Please enclose an SAE if you would like them returned.

### Paper negative



### River boats Henry Rogers

Plate camera

It's nice to know that someone enjoyed one of my articles enough to do what I suggested. Henry was inspired by my piece on Julia Margaret Cameron (AP 5 September), that also mentioned how you can use plate cameras loaded with black & white paper instead of glass plates.

Henry says he's conducted various experiments with Ilford Multigrade paper, first using gloss, but switching to matt in an attempt to stop internal reflections. He's also been trying to discover what ISO he should use his

### Hoverfly Sailesh Patel

Canon EOS 50D, 100mm macro, 1/250sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

Sailesh used his Canon EOS 50D and 100mm macro lens to photograph this hoverfly collecting nectar. Of course, the sensor size of the EOS 50D means that the 100mm lens acts more like a 150mm lens, which is no bad thing. I quite like a mid-to-long telephoto for macro work as it allows plenty of space between the subject and the lens so you don't scare the bugs so easily. Sailesh has used a fast shutter speed of 1/250sec to freeze the movement of the hoverfly and to ensure he avoided camera shake. His choice of ISO 400 has allowed him to use an aperture of f/6.3, which is presumably so wide because of the distance from the flash to the subject caused by the long lens.

Normally, I would have said that an aperture of f/6.3 was a little too wide for this kind of subject, because it will produce a very limited depth of field. Here, though, that limited depth of field is only very slightly evident. Sailesh is obviously a skilled photographer, and has managed to get the creature's eye, the surrounding hairs and the hairs on those legs closest to us all in focus. Most importantly, he has also got the fly's mouth part in focus, so we can see where it is collecting the nectar. The back end, the abdomen, is not in focus. I'm unsure about whether this is a good or a bad thing, as the more limited focus zone does a better job of drawing our attention to the stamen.

In all, the focus is very good, with the in-focus and out-of-focus areas of the plant combining nicely to make a striking picture. The colour is excellent and the exposure on the hoverfly is good. My only issue is that the



“The colour is excellent and the exposure on the hoverfly is good. My only issue is that the background is completely black”

background is completely black. This may have been Sailesh's intention, but it looks as though the picture was taken at night. While it creates a striking studio impression, it doesn't feel natural. The background is black because of the exposure rather than that it being night-time. This sort of effect is the price you pay for using flash. While the flash has enabled Sailesh to use the aperture he wanted, the areas of the background that are beyond the reach of the flash light have remained black. The way to get around this is either to use a second

flash to light the background, or to bring the background closer to the insect, which generally means some manipulation at the scene, such as picking up a leaf and putting it behind the insect. Another option would be to combine the flash with sunlight by using a longer shutter speed – and a tripod. Sailesh could position the sunlight behind his subject to create a nice rimlight effect, then use his flash to fill in the shadows rather than being the main light. A careful mix of ambient light and flash would make this shot look very different.



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paper at, having tried ISO 5 and 3, and he's working out how to solve the problem of very contrasty negatives – just the same problems that I faced.

The high contrast comes down to the fact that variable-contrast darkroom paper is designed to be used with tungsten light under an enlarger, not in the relatively blue light of day. To use it in daylight you need to convert the daylight to tungsten balance first using an orange 85B filter. Then you need to use a Multigrade filter, and I suggest grade one to produce a usable tonal range.

I'm not convinced that using gloss paper will cause problematic internal reflections, as the camera would have originally been designed for use with

glass plates. Furthermore, if contrast is very high, a little internal flare is a good thing as it will help to keep the contrast down.

Another point is that matt paper is textured, so when you scan a half-plate-sized paper negative and blow it up, you also blow up the texture. The same applies to the fibre grains of fibre-based paper. It's great if you want texturing, but if you don't want it then don't use matt or fibre paper.

The subject Henry has chosen isn't really suited to the long exposures you get with this method, as boats move and appear blurred. Nevertheless, it's brilliant that Henry has given this technique a go, and I'm impressed with what he has produced. Keep at it.



## Amaryllis flower Thomas Wright

Canon PowerShot A85, 1.2sec at f/8, ISO 50

The insides of flowers are massively popular as photographic subjects, but they are not always photographed as well as this. It looks like an easy job: you just point your camera in the correct direction and focus, right? It's not that easy, though, because it takes thought and care to achieve a good result.

Thomas has got the crucial elements – the end of the stamens with the pollen – absolutely sharp, which is a great achievement, and his focusing prowess is backed up by good lighting, cropping and composition. I like the softness of the lighting on the petals and the way you can see that the petals are gently undulating, and there's nice contrast between the highlights and the shadows. The slight differences in focus give us a 3D effect, and the yellow of the pollen standing out against the red petals gives us a sense of stereo.

Looking closely, the stamens are exceptionally sharp – possibly too sharp. Their edges contrast a little unfavourably with the softness of the rest of the flower, but I'm going to forgive Thomas that. Instead, I'll concentrate on his good depth of field, his lighting and the interesting way he has cropped into the flower, keeping the stamens down in the bottom third of the picture and the shell-like rounded mass of petals at the top. It's a great shot, and the colours are bold without being over the top. It's a fine line that separates colours that are strong but acceptable, and ones that are completely oversaturated. The yellows are perhaps borderline, but I think in all it's a well-taken picture, which is why it's my picture of the week.



“I like the softness of the lighting on the petals and the way you can see that the petals are gently undulating”



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#### News Blog

#### SEP 10 Apple event underwhelms

Speculation always surrounds Apple launch events, as I've mentioned many, many times before.

#### SEP 9 09/09/09: The end of the world is nigh... again

The date 9 September 2009 has set the web alight with predictions of the end of the world.



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# Testbericht

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Welcome to our test, reviews and advice section. Over the next few pages we will present this week's equipment tests, reader questions and technique pointers

## Etre Touchy gloves £19.99

**E**TRE'S Touchy gloves are an incredibly simple idea – knitted gloves without the forefinger and thumb tips – but they enable photographers to operate their camera without freezing every finger or having to pull gloves on and off repeatedly. Last winter they were the must-have accessory in our office and this winter they look set to be the same because Etre has switched from making them with acrylic yarn to new wool. The difference is immediately noticeable as the new gloves are softer, warmer and have a higher quality than the previous version, which helps justify the £5 jump in price.

The gloves are available in four sizes – men's, women's, youth's and child's – and there are four different colour combinations to choose from.

I found the gloves comfortable and not at all itchy, and they kept my hands warmer than traditional fingerless gloves during a chilly morning shoot. However, I'd like Etre to come up with a windproof version for the depths of winter. **Angela Nicholson**

● For more information and to order visit [www.etretouchy.com](http://www.etretouchy.com)



**Micro verdict**  
Warm, comfortable gloves that make life easy on a winter shoot

## Camera Armor Tough Strap and Safe Grip set Around £20

**C**LAIMING to be the 'toughest camera strap you can buy' is quite a bold statement, but Camera Armor's claim would appear to be pretty well founded. On the face of it, the strap looks the same as most others. It uses metal keyring-style loops that attach to the camera's strap loops and is finished with neoprene on one side and a textured rubber on the other. The neoprene provides elasticity, which gives a little flex to the strap to help prevent impact shock on

your shoulder and neck, while the soft textured rubber is comfortable and prevents it slipping from a shoulder. What really makes the strap stand out are the two threads of stainless steel sewn into its main nylon core. To break these would take a pair of wire cutters, or at least sturdy scissors, so you can rest assured that the strap will remain in one piece when in use.

Also included is a hand strap that attaches to one of the camera's strap lugs. This can be fitted with the strap or individually, and it prevents the camera falling any more than a centimetre or two from your hand should you drop it. The Tough Strap is indeed one of the strongest and most comfortable I have come across, and the Safe Grip is a great accompaniment. **Richard Sibley**



● For more information visit [www.cameraarmor.com](http://www.cameraarmor.com)

**Micro verdict**  
Solid, comfortable neck strap and a useful Safe Grip



# Celebrating Micro Four Thirds

**Angela Nicholson** looks back over the first year of the Micro Four Thirds camera system, which promises to revolutionise photography

**I**T is difficult to overstate the impact that the announcement of the Panasonic G system of Micro Four Thirds cameras had on the photographic world in September 2008. At the photokina trade show in Cologne, Germany, that month, the talk was of little else, and it seemed every manufacturer was either considering something similar or had a camera that would meet the challenge raised by the first model, the Panasonic Lumix DMC-G1.

The reason for the excitement was that the G1 is a lot smaller than most DSLRs, yet it has a DSLR-style shape and controls, accepts interchangeable lenses and has a Four Thirds-sized sensor. This sensor is bigger than the devices in most comparably sized bridge and compact cameras.

## A new approach

Before the G series was launched, Panasonic was keen to enter the DSLR market. The company knew it was late to join the party and wasn't especially well known to enthusiasts, so it needed to create an impact. Its first attempt, the Leica inspired Lumix DMC-L1, was loved by a few because of its traditional controls (including an aperture ring), but many were unimpressed by its bulk and rectangular design. While the more 'conventional' Lumix DMC-L10 had Live View with contrast-detection AF and an articulated screen, it too

had few fans.

Panasonic went back to the drawing board. Although Olympus did this to an extent when devising the original Four Thirds standard and looking for the optimal relationship in size between the sensor and lens mount, the company's overall camera design followed traditional principles using an SLR layout with a reflex mirror. Panasonic used its expertise in compact digital stills and video camera production to help develop a completely new type of digital camera.

While the Micro Four Thirds system is built around a Four Thirds-sized sensor, the cameras have no reflex

mirror and this enables the distance from the lens flange to the sensor to be halved (40mm to 20mm). The lack of a mirror also means that the rear element of the lens can be recessed further into the camera, and thus closer to the sensor. This, plus the 6mm reduction in the diameter of the lens mount, enables the overall size of the optics to be significantly decreased in comparison with standard Four Thirds or 35mm lenses. In addition, the Micro Four Thirds lens mount has 11 contacts – two more than the Four Thirds mount. These extra pins help speed communication between camera and lens, reducing

time lags and boosting the Live View video-recording performance.

## A system evolves

Since the Panasonic Lumix DMC-G1 was launched along with the Lumix G Vario 14–45mm f/3.5–5.6 Asph Mega OIS and Lumix G Vario 45–200mm f/4–5.6 Mega OIS lenses, three more cameras and six more optics have been introduced. The first camera, the Panasonic Lumix DMC-GH1, is similar to the G1 but with HD video. Panasonic also introduced the Lumix Vario HD 14–140mm f/4–5.8 Asph Mega OIS lens. This is the first in a new line of HD lenses that are designed to complement the



### 5 Aug 08

Panasonic and Olympus announce the development of the Micro Four Thirds system

### 12 Sep 08

Panasonic announces the world's first Micro Four Thirds system camera, the Lumix DMC-G1

### 22 Sep 08

Olympus announces Micro Four Thirds digital camera under development

### 14 Feb 09

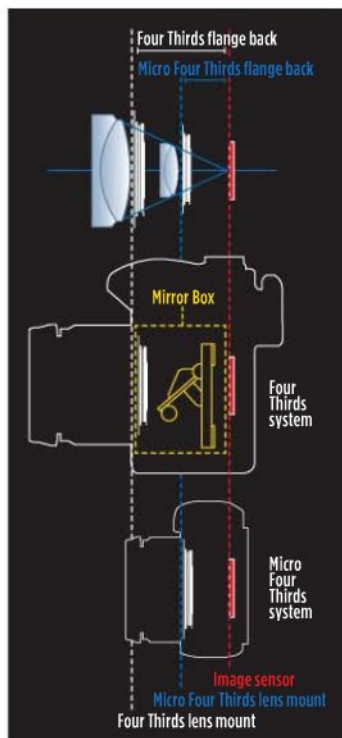
Panasonic G system wins AP's Technical Innovation of the Year Award



### 3 Mar 09

Panasonic introduces the Lumix DMC-GH1





Excluding the mirror that is found in SLRs has enabled Micro Four Thirds cameras to be made significantly smaller

camera's video capability.

Although Panasonic hinted that it would produce a Micro Four Thirds camera with compact camera styling when the G1 was launched, it was Olympus that brought us the first such camera, the Pen E-P1. Olympus based its design on its popular Pen, and the Pen E-P1 won admirers thanks to its retro styling, small size and sensor-based image stabilisation. A slim, collapsible M Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 and slim M Zuiko Digital 17mm f/2.8 pancake kit lens options are also popular.

Just weeks after the arrival of Olympus's first Micro Four Thirds camera, Panasonic introduced its third, the Lumix DMC-GF1, which also has compact-camera-style features. This has fuelled a huge debate about which is the better option, with Olympus fans extolling the virtues of the E-P1's built-in image stabilisation and Panasonic fans citing the GF1's built-in flash (the EP-1 lacks one) and its excellent detail resolution. We plan to compare both cameras in the near future.



## Available kit

While the GH1 sensor is able to make use of more of the imaging circle of the lens, and has a greater number of photosites, all Micro Four Thirds cameras are believed to use the same Live MOS sensor. Each camera has an effective pixel count of 12.1 million and lenses are subject to a 2x focal-length conversion factor.

### Olympus

Pen E-P1, M Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6, M Zuiko Digital 17mm f/2.8 pancake, FL-14 flashgun, VF-1 viewfinder for use with 17mm f/2.8 lens, MMF-1 Four Thirds lens to Micro Four Thirds adapter, MMF-2 Olympus OM lens to Micro Four Thirds adapter, CS-10B body jacket

### Panasonic

Lumix DMC-G1, DMC-GH1, DMC-GF1, G Vario 7-14mm f/4 Asph, Lumix G Vario 14-45mm f/3.5-5.6 Asph Mega OIS, Vario HD 14-140mm f/4-5.8 Asph Mega OIS, Vario HD 45-200mm f/4-5.6 Mega OIS, G Vario 20mm f/1.7 Asph, Leica DG Macro-Elmarit 45mm f/2.8 Asph Mega OIS, DMW-LVF1E electronic viewfinder for GF1, DMW-MA1 Four Thirds lens to Micro Four Thirds adapter, DMW-MA2M Leica M lens to Micro Four Thirds adapter, DMW-MA3RE Leica R lens to Micro Four Thirds adapter

### Lenses for 2010

Lumix G 100-300mm f/4-5.6 OIS, G 8mm f/3.5 fisheye, G 14mm f/2.8.



## Competition



## Panasonic

## WIN a Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF1 plus lens

We're offering one lucky reader the chance to win a fantastic **12.1-million-pixel Lumix DMC-GF1** complete with **Lumix G Vario 20mm f/1.7 Asph lens** – and it could be you! All you have to do is answer the question below. To enter you will need to visit [www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/competitions](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/competitions). The closing date is Friday, 30 October 2009.

### Question:

What is the lens flange to sensor distance of a Micro Four Thirds camera?

### 16 Jun 09

Olympus introduces the Pen E-P1 Micro Four Thirds, the first interchangeable-lens system camera with compact camera design, plus M Zuiko Digital 17mm f/2.8 pancake and M Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 lenses

### 15 Aug 09

Panasonic awarded European Multimedia Camera Award 2009-2010 by EISA panel for Lumix DMC-GH1



### 18 Aug 09

Olympus awarded European Camera Award 2009-2010 by EISA panel for Pen E-P1



### 2 Sep 09

Panasonic introduces the Lumix DMC-GF1, plus Leica DG Macro-Elmarit 45mm f/2.8 Asph Mega OIS lens and Lumix G Vario 20mm f/1.7 Asph pancake lens



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# Nikon D300s vs Pentax K-7

How will the unique features of Pentax's most advanced DSLR compare with the latest Nikon DSLR upgrade? **Richard Sibley** puts the **Pentax K-7** to the test against the **Nikon D300s**

**Richard Sibley**  
Technical Writer



**I**N the past year or so, Nikon has enjoyed something of a resurgence. The influx of new cameras, including the D3x, D700 and D3000, has helped the company steal some of the market share from Canon, the market leader and Nikon's main rival. With almost an entirely new line-up it made sense for Nikon to introduce the D300s, an upgrade of one of its best-selling cameras, while photographers wait until its next high-end enthusiast DSLR is introduced.

In comparison with Nikon, Pentax has struggled to make much of an impression in terms of sales, despite producing some excellent DSLRs

in the past few years. Of these, the K20D stands out, boasting many features of the Nikon D300, plus two million more pixels and in-camera image stabilisation.

With a focus on innovative features and high build quality, the Pentax K-7 follows on from the K20D. Keeping the same 14.6-million-pixel resolution as the K20D, the K-7 has 2.3 million more effective pixels than the D300s, and it boasts some intriguing features, such as a unique in-camera HDR function and a self-levelling sensor.

## Features

It is to Pentax's credit that it beat Canon and Nikon when it introduced the first 14.6-million-pixel sensor in its K20D. The K-7 has the same 14.6-million-pixel resolution, but the sensor has been newly developed.

Similarly, the Nikon D300s has the same 12.3-million-pixel resolution that was found in the original D300, although, like the K-7, the sensor has been improved and is most likely the same as the one currently found in the Nikon D90.

The K-7 has a new processing engine, the Prime II system, which is an upgrade of the original Pentax Real Image Engine found in the K20D. Much of the reason behind the need for an upgrade is to meet the data-processing needs that the introduction of video processing brings.

On the surface it would appear that the D300s uses the same Expeed Processing system as the D300, although no doubt some optimisation has taken place because the original D300 didn't have to cope with the added demands of video capture.

## Nikon D300s Enthusiast DSLR



- 12.3-million-pixel CMOS sensor
- 51-point AF
- 1005-pixel Matrix Metering
- HD video capture
- Street price £1,250 (body only)

## Pentax K-7 Enthusiast DSLR



- 14.6-million-pixel CMOS sensor
- Self-levelling sensor
- In-camera HDR
- HD video capture
- Street price £1,000 (body only)



# Resolution, noise and sensitivity

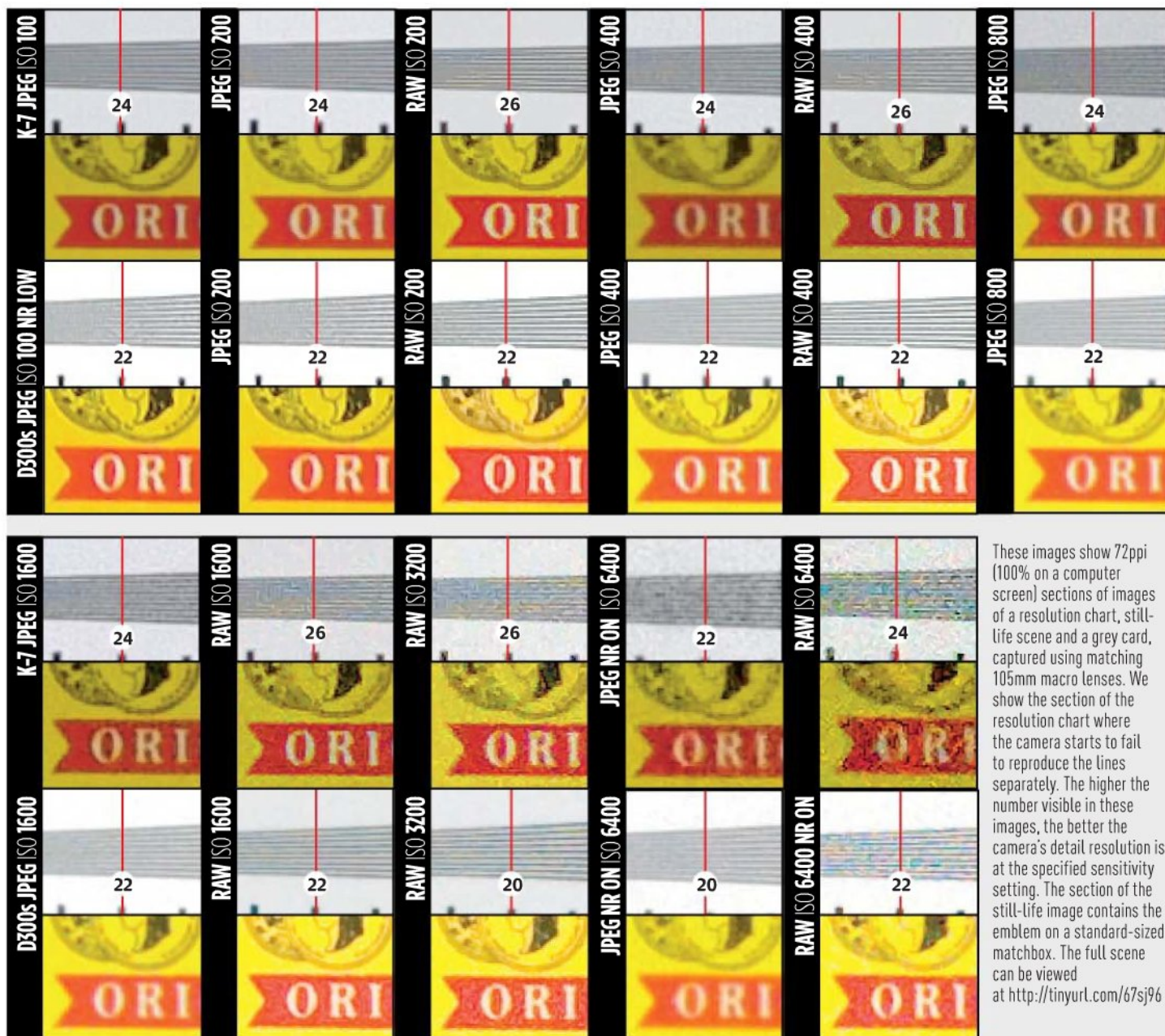
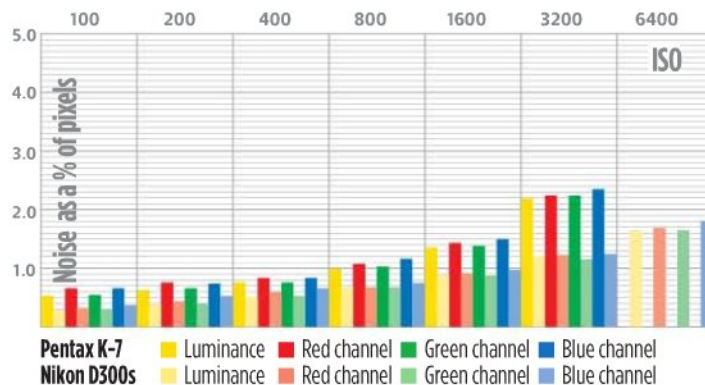
Both cameras have ISO sensitivities of ISO 100-6400. On the D300s the settings at either extreme are extended settings – the camera's native ISO is actually ISO 200. Although useful in low-light situations, ISO 6400 shows a fair amount of noise. Thankfully, this is well handled by the in-camera noise reduction when shooting JPEG files, and can be removed from raw files to produce good results.

In fact, the results at higher ISO sensitivities look far better on the Nikon D300s than on the Pentax K-7. A close look at images taken at ISO 6400 on the K-7 look like either a soft speckled mess or a jagged noisy mess. That said, up to ISO 1600 the level of noise produced by the K-7 is comparable to the Nikon D300s.

The saving grace of the Pentax K-7

is the fact that its 14.6 million pixels are packed onto a sensor the same size as that used in the 12.3-million-pixel D300s, so the K-7 has a higher pixel density. While this may be the reason for the greater noise at the higher ISO sensitivities, it does give it the edge when it comes to image resolution. It manages to resolve up to 26 on our test chart, whereas the D300 manages around 22.

For most photographers, extreme ISO sensitivities are only used in extreme circumstances so, with this in mind, it is really the results between ISO 100 and 400 that are most important. Within this range the images on the D300s are smoother, although the K-7 is capable of resolving more detail.



These images show 72ppi (100% on a computer screen) sections of images of a resolution chart, still-life scene and a grey card, captured using matching 105mm macro lenses. We show the section of the resolution chart where the camera starts to fail to reproduce the lines separately. The higher the number visible in these images, the better the camera's detail resolution is at the specified sensitivity setting. The section of the still-life image contains the emblem on a standard-sized matchbox. The full scene can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/67sj96>



# Data file

## Focal points

### Image stabilisation

Pentax has developed in-camera sensor shift stabilisation for the K-7 that helps to keep images sharp at slower shutter speeds. This means that it works regardless of which lens is mounted to the camera, including older K-mount lenses. In contrast, Nikon uses image stabilisation in its lenses. This means that a lens must have Nikon's VR (Vibration Technology) built in to benefit from image stabilisation. Thankfully, there are many affordable Nikon lenses that have VR technology, but older F-mount lenses do not.

### In-camera sensor cleaning

Both cameras have sensor-cleaning functions to help keep the sensor clear of dust and debris.

### Software

The Nikon D300s comes with Nikon View NX to edit both JPEG and raw images. Nikon's Capture NX is a better version of the software, but sadly this costs £158.99. The Pentax K-7 comes with Pentax Photo Browser and Pentax Photo Laboratory to help you edit and catalogue raw and JPEG files. For convenience, the K-7 can save raw images in the Adobe DNG format, so users who already use third-party raw conversion software should have no problem using their existing software package.



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<b>RRP</b>	£1,499.99	£1,199.99
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<b>Output size</b>	4288x2848 pixels	4672x3104 pixels
<b>Focal length mag</b>	1.5x	1.5x
<b>Lens mount</b>	Nikon F	Pentax KAF2
<b>File size</b>	Approx 20MB raw, 4MB JPEG (high quality, large)	Approx 15MB raw file on card, opens to 83MB and approx 7.2MB premium-quality large JPEG opens to 41.5MB
<b>File format</b>	Raw, JPEG, raw + JPEG simultaneously	12-bit PEF or DNG raw, JPEG, JPEG + raw simultaneously
<b>Compression</b>	Two-stage JPEG	Three-stage JPEG
<b>Colour space</b>	Adobe RGB, sRGB	Adobe RGB, sRGB
<b>Shutter type</b>	Electronically controlled focal-plane	Electronically controlled focal-plane
<b>Shutter speeds</b>	30-1/8000sec in 1/3 steps plus B to 4mins	30-1/8000sec in 1/3 or 1/2EV steps plus B
<b>Max flash sync</b>	1/250sec	1/180sec with built-in flash, High Speed sync with compatible Pentax flashguns
<b>ISO</b>	ISO 100-1600 plus ISO 3200 'Hi' setting	ISO 100-3200, expandable to ISO 6400 in 1, 1/2 or 1/3EV steps
<b>Exposure modes</b>	PASM plus movie	PASM, sensitivity priority, shutter and aperture priority, bulb and movie
<b>Metering system</b>	3D Matrix Metering, centreweighted, spot	77-segment metering, centreweighted, spot
<b>Exposure comp</b>	±5EV in 1/3 EV steps	±5EV in 1/3 or 1/2EV steps
<b>Exposure bracketing</b>	±5EV over 3, 5 or 7 exposures in 1/3 or 2/3EV steps	±2 EV over 3 or 5 exposures in 1/3 or 1/2 EV steps
<b>White balance</b>	Auto, 7 presets (all with fine-tuning), 4 custom settings, plus Kelvin setting	Auto, 10 presets, plus custom setting, Kelvin and WB fine adjustment
<b>WB bracket</b>	Yes, 2-9 frames, in 10, 20 or 30 mired stops	Yes, over 3 images
<b>Drive mode</b>	Single, continuous (Hi/Lo selectable, 6fps for 100 frames (JPEGs and 12-bit NEF), 2.5 fps (14 bit NEF)	Single, continuous Hi/Lo, self-timer (10/2secs selectable), mirror lock-up. Up to 5.2fps for 17 PEF or around 30 premium JPEG or 40 Hi JPEGs
<b>LCD</b>	Fixed 3in TFT with 920,000 dots	3in TFT with 920,000 dots
<b>Viewfinder type</b>	Optical pentamirror	Pentaprism
<b>Field of view</b>	Approx 100%	Approx 100%
<b>Dioptr adjustment</b>	-2 to +1 dioptre	-2.5 to +1.5 dioptre
<b>Focusing modes</b>	Manual, single shot AF, continuous AF,	AFS (single), AFC (continuous), manual
<b>AF points</b>	51 automatically selectable points, single vari-zone selection	11 points AF (cross type)
<b>Focusing screen</b>	Type B BriteView Clear Matte screen Mark II	Interchangeable Natural-Bright-Matte III
<b>DoF preview</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>PC socket</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Built-in flash</b>	Yes, GN 17m @ ISO 200	Yes
<b>Cable release</b>	No, optional remote release	No, optional remote release
<b>Memory card</b>	SD/SDHC/CompactFlash	SD or SDHC
<b>Power</b>	Rechargeable Li-Ion (supplied)	Rechargeable Li-Ion D-L190 (supplied)
<b>Connectivity</b>	USB 2.0 Hi-Speed/HDMI	USB 2.0 Hi-Speed
<b>Weight</b>	840g without battery or card/s, 920g with	670g without battery or card/s, 750g with
<b>Dimensions</b>	147x114x74mm	130.5x96.5x72.5mm



If you look at the specification of both cameras you will see they are strikingly similar, although there are a few notable differences. For example, the Nikon D300s has 51 AF points compared to 11 on the K-7. The D300s also has an advantage on paper when it comes to exposure metering, as it uses a 1005-pixel metering system that is far greater than the 77-segment metering of the K-7. However, it is not on paper, but in use, that the strength of these features will be evaluated.

Like Olympus, Panasonic and Sony, Pentax has been innovative in terms of introducing features to its DSLR range. In a highly competitive market it is important to keep pushing the boundaries of what a DSLR is capable of and Pentax has introduced features that are currently unique to the K-7.

The first of these is in-camera HDR images. These are not achieved through altering the levels of an image, like a dynamic range optimiser. Instead, the K-7 uses the same principle as software-based HDR programs by taking a series of images of the same scene at different exposures, then combining the images automatically.

Perhaps the most ingenious new feature is the automatic horizon correction. This combines an in-camera level – a feature that is becoming increasingly common – with the K-7's sensor shift stabilisation. By allowing the sensor to rotate slightly, as well as shift up, down, left and right, it means the camera can interpret data from the level and rotate the image sensor by up to 2° in either direction.

Apart from the introduction of video capture, there isn't a great deal that's revolutionary about the D300s. There is the introduction of a 'Quiet Mode' shutter release, a second memory card slot so that SD and CompactFlash cards can be used, and a slightly improved frame rate (no doubt made possible due to an increase in the processing capabilities that are required for video), but it is very much a tweak of the already excellent D300.

Nikon and Pentax have a long legacy in their respective lens mounts. Despite both the Nikon F mount and Pentax K mounts being modified over the years to deal with autofocus and the digital age, the basic structure of the mount has remained largely the same. This means that, with a few exceptions, all Nikon F-mount lenses and Pentax K-mount lenses can be used on the D300s and K-7 respectively. Of course, the aperture and focus must be set manually on older manual-focus lenses, but it





## Nikon D300s Matrix Metering



## Pentax K-7 Evaluative Metering



In most situations, the metered exposure of the K-7 and D300s are within 0.3EV of each other. The images above are only 0.3EV apart, despite the fact that they look very different. This is because the tone curve of the K-7 is far shallower below the midtones, meaning than shadow areas appear darker than they do on the Nikon D300s

does mean there are a good deal of used lens bargains to be had, especially if your photography doesn't rely on autofocus for maximum performance.

## Build and handling

Build quality is one area where Pentax really excels. As you would expect from the company's highest specified DSLR to date, the build quality of the K-7 matches that of the Nikon D300s. With 77 weatherproof and dustproof seals, and a stainless-steel alloy frame, magnesium-alloy body and a new Pentax SMC DA 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 AL WR (weather resistant) kit lens, the K-7 should suit those who are not afraid to venture outdoors in less-than-pleasing weather.

The D300s has a magnesium-alloy body, and similar dustproof and weatherproof seals. One big difference is in the size and weight of the two cameras. Weighing 670g, the K-7 is 170g lighter than the D300s, which is 840g. Although this may not sound much on paper, it is noticeable when you are holding both cameras.

Much of the light weight of the K-7 is down to its size. Pentax claims that it is the smallest DSLR in its class, and when alongside the Canon EOS 50D and the Olympus E-3, the K-7 is the least heavy.

Although a smaller camera overall, the handgrip of the K-7 is of a similar depth to the D300s, making it easy to hold even for those with large hands. However, despite its size, the K-7 feels as much a solid and professional camera as the D300s.

In terms of control, both cameras have a similar array of buttons, and both have dual control wheels at the front and rear of the camera. All the

regularly used shooting options can be found without going into the main menu of each camera.

For those few options that you may wish to change regularly while shooting, a quick double press of the Info buttons on each camera brings up an on-screen display of different options. On the Pentax K-7 these allow you to change, for example, the image quality, file format and picture effects.

The Nikon D300s displays two settings 'Banks' on its Info screen. These banks allow you to change four items from each of the custom menus and the shooting menu. So, for example, you can choose four settings from the shooting menu and save those to Shooting Bank A, and four settings from the custom menu and save those to Custom Bank A. If you select to show Custom Bank A and Shooting Bank A (as opposed to B, C or D) on the rear screen, you can quickly access and change the settings you have selected. This is useful if, for example, you require different picture styles, image quality or focus settings for landscape images and another one for portraits.

One thing I find useful is the variety and number of custom setting options. The K-7 has a total of 37 custom settings, allowing you to change a host of features including button functions and AF adjustment. Another useful feature is the ability to embed your copyright details into every image taken with the camera. All three of these features are also available on the D300s.

Of the two cameras, the D300s has a greater number of custom options, though most photographers

will only ever change one or two of these depending on their individual requirements.

## Dynamic range

At 12.5EV for the D300s and 12.2EV for the K-7, both cameras have an excellent dynamic range. However, there are differences between how this range is spread. I found that the K-7 has darker shadow areas than the Nikon D300s, which creates a higher contrast in the images from the K-7. There is a shadow correction option in the K-7, which lifts the shadows to a more acceptable level. Similarly, the K-7 also has a highlight correction setting that slightly darkens all but completely white highlights. I would suggest that those shooting solely JPEG images on the K-7 leave both these features on.

The Nikon D300s has Active D-Lighting, which achieves a similar result by lightening shadow and dark midtones.

The wide dynamic range of the cameras should offer flexibility to those who save images as raw files. Those photographers who prefer the in-camera simplicity of JPEG files will find there are plenty of shadow, highlight and image-style adjustments on both cameras to achieve excellent results.

However, straight out of the box, I would say the Nikon D300s has the edge over the Pentax K-7.

## White balance and colour

In most conditions I found that the auto white balance of both the Nikon D300s and Pentax K-7 produced good results. Of the two, the D300s gave slightly better

results in sunny conditions when set to both its daylight and AWB settings. The K-7 overcompensated a little and the results were slightly too blue, but they were still acceptable and could easily be corrected in post-capture software.

Under tungsten lighting the results are similar, with both cameras performing best when set to their tungsten setting rather than the AWB setting. While both cameras can have their default settings manually adjusted, the K-7 offers another setting, called WB adjustable range, which is found in its custom menu. This allows a preset white balance, such as tungsten, to be selected. However, rather than being a single, fixed value, it can be changed so that the camera automatically adjusts the white balance within a set range depending on the light source that has been selected. Think of it as the K-7 having an automatic tungsten white balance or an automatic fluorescent white balance.

When I tried using the WB adjustable range under tungsten lighting, I found that it worked extremely well. In fact, it worked too well, removing any sign that tungsten light had been used, and making the picture look somewhat sterile and flat.

There are situations where I can see this feature being useful, such as in a studio environment where a perfectly white background is required. However, despite the cleverness of the WB adjustment range, removing all traces of ambient lighting does have a tendency to make images look a bit too clinical and lacking in atmosphere.

As is common in most DSLRs, there is a host of different colour options available when shooting JPEG images, all of which can be tweaked to suit

Of the two cameras, the D300s has more custom options than the K-7, though most photographers will only ever change one or two of these



# Features in use

## HDR

**A** UNIQUE feature of the Pentax K-7 is its in-camera HDR option. Rather than simply altering the contrast curves of an image to produce a pseudo-HDR effect, it creates a true HDR image. The K-7 does this by taking three sequential images with different exposure values, although you only need to press the shutter once. The camera then blends these images together to create a single HDR image, where there is more detail in the shadow and highlight areas of the image than there would be in a single shot.

Of course, you need to shoot on a tripod when you use the HDR mode,

as even the slightest movement can cause a ghostly blurred effect in the final HDR image.

Overall, the K-7's in-camera HDR images are good, but they lack the level of control that can be had when using dedicated HDR creation software, such as Photomatrix Pro. The results are much more subtle and are more like those found when using Adobe Photoshop to create an HDR image. Those people looking for a very dramatic, almost comic-book-style HDR effect will be far better served by Photomatrix, but for subtle effects the K-7's images are quite good, especially after a quick Levels adjustment in image-editing software.



## How to create an HDR image using the Nikon D300s

The best way to create an HDR image using the Nikon D300s is to set the exposure bracketing to take three frames: the correct exposure, an image 1EV above this and an image 1EV below this. For scenes with extremely bright and dark areas, you may wish to extend this to five frames or you can alter the EV of the exposures either side to 2EV. In effect, you are manually going through the same procedure that the K-7 performs in-camera.

**Step 1:** Select the images you want to merge together in Adobe Photoshop Bridge and select Tools>Photoshop>Merge to HDR.

**Step 2:** This will then open up a dialogue box that allows you to select which image to use to make the HDR. You can reject any of the images you don't want to make up part of the final image at this point. You may also adjust the white point of the image. Generally, try to keep as few white areas in the image as you can in order to retain as much detailed information as possible. You will be adjusting the Levels and Contrast in the next step.

**Step 3:** When the images open in Photoshop, you can adjust the Levels and Curves to create

a picture that has plenty of detail in both the highlight and shadow areas. The HDR image is 32-bits, which means it is capable of displaying a huge number of different colours and shades. This allows you to adjust the image without noise being introduced. However, most people will want to convert the image to JPEG so it can be easily displayed on a number of devices. However, the problem with this is that JPEGs are 8-bit files, so the 32-bit HDR image must be converted to 8-bit by selecting Image>Mode>8 bits/Channel.

**Step 4:** This opens another window to complete the HDR conversion. Generally, I don't adjust the settings here, as all that's required is a slight nudge of the Exposure and Gamma controls to keep the brightness and contrast of the image looking good.

The final image shows plenty of detail in the previously dark shadow areas. Lightening these areas hasn't lightened the sky, and has kept detail in the highlight areas.

For those who prefer a more dramatic effect, try using Photomatrix Pro (version 3 was reviewed in AP 7 February).







Both the Nikon D300s and the Pentax K-7 performed well in AWB mode. Under tungsten lighting I found results from both cameras to be a little pink, and outdoors the K-7 has added a touch too much blue in bright sunlight, but the results were perfectly acceptable. Pentax's automatic tungsten setting, activated in the Custom menu, works almost too well in some cases. While the picture right above is slightly too blue, it is closer to the original colour of the shell than the D300s image. However, aesthetically the D300s image is more pleasing

the particular style of a photographer. Both cameras feature in-camera raw conversion, which can be useful to see how an image can be adjusted. However, these modes do not provide the level of adjustment that can be provided by raw conversion software.

One unique feature of the K-7 is its ability to create in-camera HDR images. Once again, while this is fun, those really interested in HDR images will prefer to use imaging software to perform this task, as there are only two settings that can be adjusted in-camera. For more on shooting HDR images with the K-7 and Nikon D300s, see 'Features in Use' on page 49.

## Viewfinder, LCD, Live View and video

The K-7 is the first Pentax DSLR to have a 3in LCD screen with a 920,000-dot resolution, putting it on a par with the 3in screen of the Nikon D300s. Both cameras offer a Live View function using this screen, which can be activated by pressing a dedicated button on the rear of each camera. When in Live View, contrast detection is used to focus the lens on both the D300s and K-7.

However, most DSLR users will spend the majority of their time using the camera's viewfinder, so it's obviously important that the viewfinder is large and bright.

Thankfully, the viewfinders of the Nikon D300s and Pentax K-7 offer an approximate 100% field of view, with the D300s having the slightly better magnification at 0.94x compared to 0.92x on the K-7's viewfinder.

In use, I noticed little difference between the two viewfinders. There was a slight advantage in the K-7 viewfinder as the in-camera level is visible, allowing you to make sure

all your shots are straight without removing your eye. In the D300s the level is an option in Live View mode, making it less convenient and therefore less useful as it slows down the process of capturing an image.

Both cameras feature this year's must-have feature – HD video capture. While contrast-detection AF is available on a single AF point of the Nikon D300s during video, this will only really work with still subjects. The Pentax K-7 has no AF at all during video capture. Both cameras offer the same 1280x720 resolution video capture.

## Metering

Despite the more advanced metering system of the Nikon D300s, I found there was very little difference in

the metered exposures of these cameras. When in their evaluative metering modes, exposures were generally within 0.3EV of each other. Where there was a slight difference, it appeared that the D300s was trying to lift shadow areas, therefore sacrificing highlights a little, while the K-7 was trying to preserve highlights but at the expense of shadow detail.

Similarly, spotmetering produced almost identical results. Again, where there was a difference it was within 0.3EV and could be put down to the size of the area used for spotmetering. Testing the spotmetering of both cameras by photographing a grey card confirmed that there is indeed 0.3EV difference in exposures, with the D300s being the lighter of the two.

## Autofocus

One area where the D300s has an advantage over the K-7 is in its AF system. It is the same 51-point AF module found on the D300 and D90, which is a DX-sensor version of the Multicam 3500FX featured on the Nikon D3, D3x and D700.

In use, it is quicker and quieter than the 11-point SAFOX VIII+ autofocus system found in the Pentax K-7. In low light, the K-7's AF is also more 'fidgety' as it seeks a focus point, and it needs to be a lot darker before the AF assist light comes on, compared with the D300s.

With 51-point 3D tracking to aid shooting moving subjects, the D300s has the edge. However, if you don't take a lot of photographs of fast-moving subjects, the K-7 will be fine.

# Our verdict

**B**EING a fan of the Nikon D300 and Pentax K20D, I was looking forward to this test. I wasn't disappointed, as the Nikon D300s and Pentax K-7 are well-built,

highly specified enthusiast cameras.

There are obviously advantages and disadvantages to each model. The D300s has a better AF system, a faster frame rate and performs

better in low-light conditions, while the K-7 has features unique to the camera, such as auto leveling and in-camera HDR.

With only a few differences, we have actually re-scored the K-7 giving it a point more for Dynamic Range, LCD/Video and AWB/Colour, moving it up to 86% from its original 83% score.

These scores should now reflect the fact that, in use, aside from the slower autofocus of the Pentax K-7, there is not a great deal between it and the Nikon D300s.

Overall, I'd suggest the Nikon D300s is the better camera, but those who aren't already tied to the Nikon F-mount system, and wish to save a few hundred pounds, should seriously consider the Pentax K-7. However, if your photography is reliant on having a camera with AF that performs quickly, particularly in low-light conditions, the Nikon D300s is the preferable camera.

Nikon D300s	Features	9/10
	Noise/resolution	27/30
	Dynamic range	9/10
	LCD/video	8/10
	Build/handling	9/10
	Autofocus	9/10
	Metering	9/10
Pentax K-7	AWB/colour	9/10
	Features	9/10
	Noise/resolution	28/30
	Dynamic range	9/10
	LCD/video	8/10
	Build/handling	8/10
	Autofocus	7/10
	Metering	8/10
	AWB/colour	9/10

Nikon D300s  
Tested as: Enthusiast DSLR  
Rated: Very good

89%

Pentax K-7  
Tested as: Enthusiast DSLR  
Rated: Very good

86%



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# In-camera dynamic range optimisation

Most current DSLRs have a dynamic range optimisation function designed to help record detail that would otherwise be lost.

**Angela Nicholson** investigates their impact and how they work

**O**UR eyes and brains are clever, adaptable organs. Even on a very bright sunny day we can usually discern some detail in the strong shadows under the trees and hedgerows in a landscape. Then, when we look up at the bright white clouds we are able to see their billowing form as a series of subtly different shades. However, capturing all this detail in a single exposure has always been a challenge for photographers. Set the exposure for the shadows and the clouds burn out, but set it for the clouds and the darker areas become a deep, impenetrable black. Using a mid-way exposure may make the majority of the scene look acceptable, but the brightest highlights and darkest shadows are lost.

These days many digital cameras feature technology that can help. It usually works by brightening dark tones while darkening the brightest areas so more detail is visible across the tonal range. Although this effect is sometimes referred to as 'dynamic range extension' because it enables detail to be seen where previously it could not, it actually involves a compression of the range because the lower and higher brightness values are adjusted towards the mid-point.

Dynamic range optimisation systems have a variety of different names, including Active D-Lighting, Dynamic Range Optimisation, Shadow Adjustment Technology, Intelligent Exposure and Auto Lighting Optimiser. In many cases the effect may be applied at different, selectable levels.

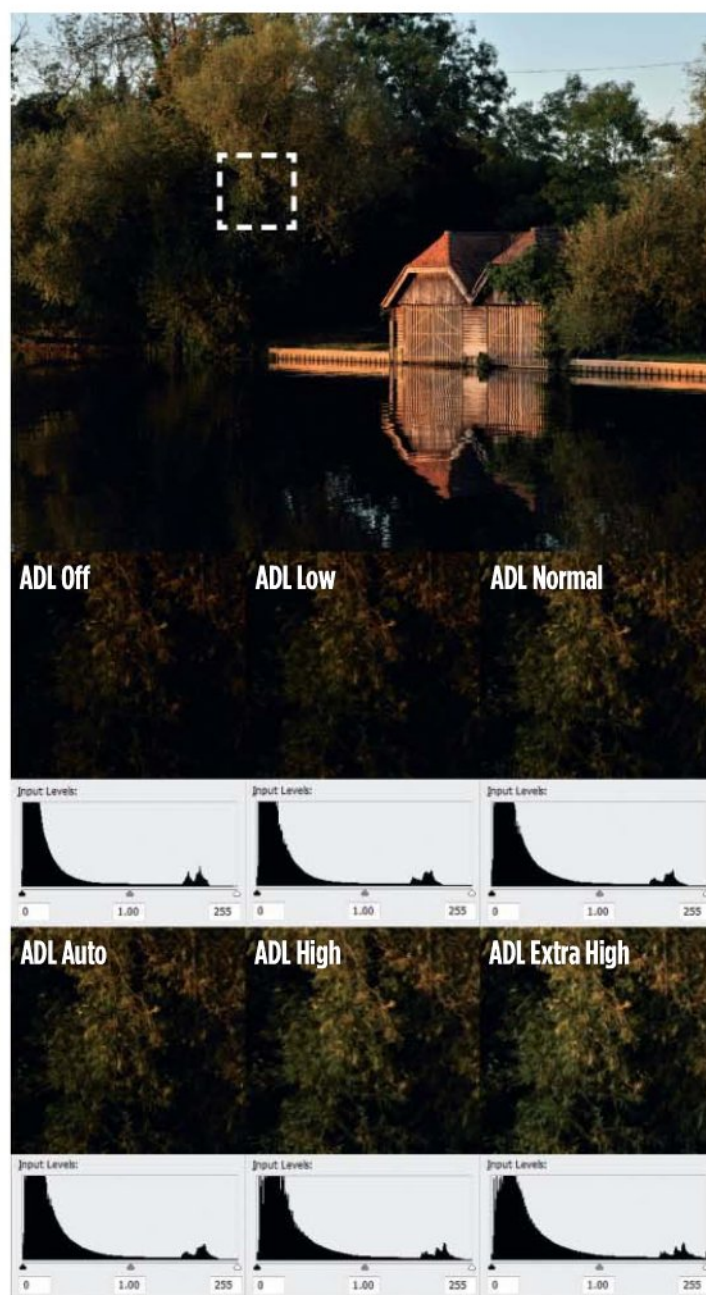
Some systems, such as Panasonic's Intelligent Exposure and Nikon's Active D-Lighting mode, may adjust the exposure of the image, which has an impact upon both raw and JPEG files. However, the image-adjustment phase takes place during the in-camera processing of JPEG files. In some cases the effect may also be applied to raw files when they are processed using proprietary software.

## How it works

There are several factors that govern a camera's dynamic range: the design of its sensor; the size of the photosites; and the bit-depth of the A/D converter and image processor, for instance. A dynamic range optimising system cannot adjust the actual dynamic range of a camera or increase the number of tones that it is capable of distinguishing; it can only help translate the recorded data into visible detail.

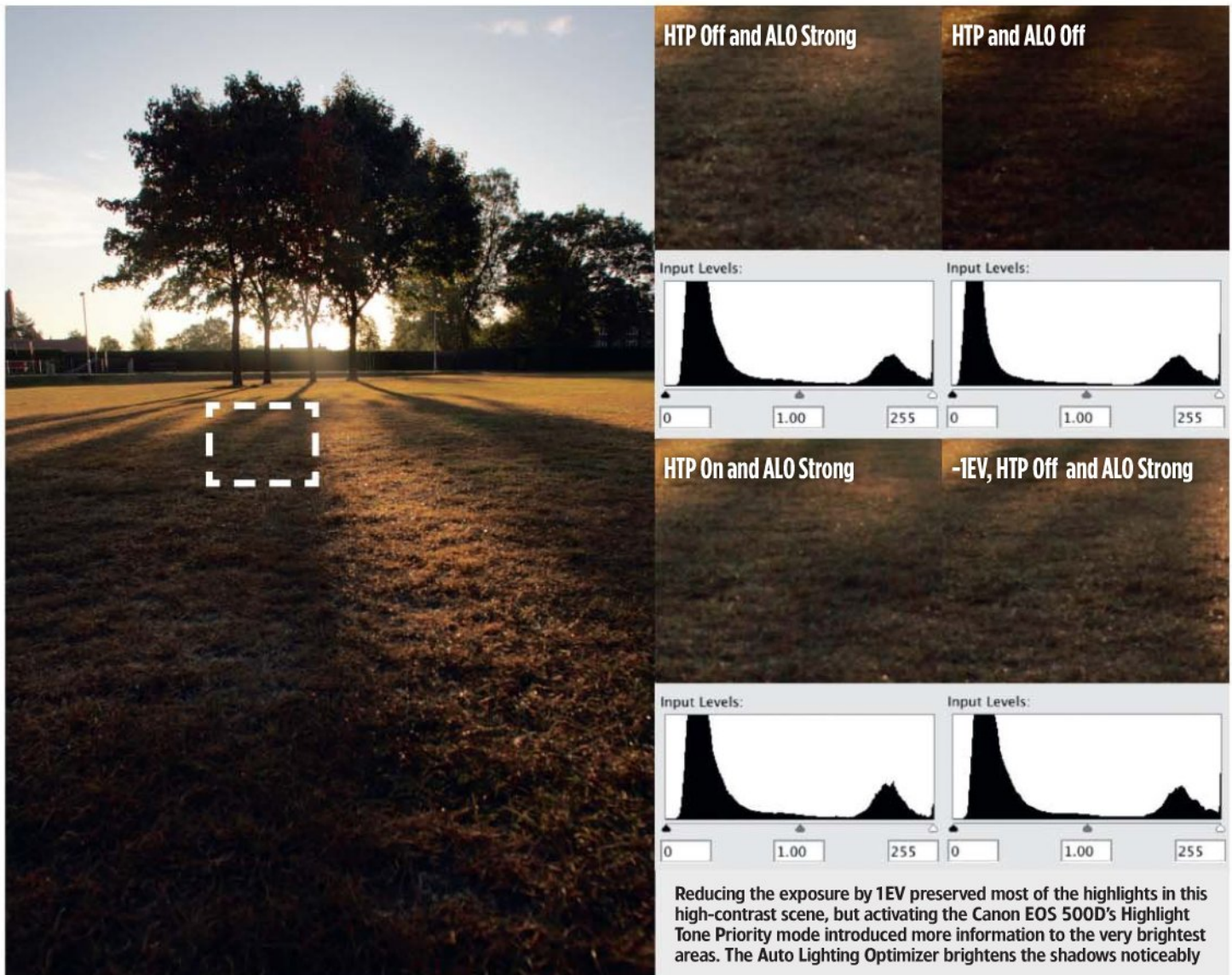
Some cameras now have 14-bit rather than 12-bit image processing. This extends the number of tones that can be recorded in an image, but JPEG files are still only 8-bit so the 12 and 14-bit data must be downsampled, or compressed. A good dynamic range optimisation system can assist with this compression process and help to ensure that detail is visible where it needs to be to produce a natural-looking result.

In basic terms, a dynamic range optimiser works by applying a tone curve to an image to lighten the shadows, while darkening the highlights to bring out the details. The



The Active D-Lighting of the Nikon D300s in its higher settings has a dramatic impact upon the brightness of the shadows in these images. The large peak of the histogram moves progressively to the right as the level increases





curve simply modifies the gain (or amplification) that is applied to the sensor signal to produce the image. As anyone who has done this post-capture in an image-editing software package will know, it can result in a reduction in both local and image-wide contrast. So rather than applying a uniform curve, most dynamic range optimisation systems work by analysing the image and applying gain more selectively.

The image analysis goes some way to explaining why the results from using a dynamic range optimisation system can seem rather unpredictable. They are adaptive and their response changes depending upon the scene. Consequently, like many photographers, I have several examples of images taken with and without the system being activated that are indistinguishable. Yet there are others that are distinctly different.

The human eye is better at seeing detail in shadows than it is in highlights, so most dynamic range optimisation systems are calibrated

towards extracting detail from the darker parts of the image. However, there is usually also an element of highlight recovery. In some cases – like with Canon's DSLRs and the Pentax K-7, for example – the user can opt to enhance the shadows and highlights separately. The highlight preservation mode often restricts the minimum sensitivity setting available as it involves underexposing the image (for example, by using ISO 100 when ISO 200 is selected), and there is a reduction in the gain applied to the brightest areas so they appear a little darker.

### Tonal adjustment

To investigate how an image's tonal range is adjusted I took a series of shots of a Sekonic 25-patch Exposure Profile II chart (£128) using a Nikon D300s with the Active D-Lighting set to Off and Extra High at different exposures (see page 54). I then measured the brightness value of each patch and compared the image histograms.

“ Rather than applying a uniform curve, most systems work by analysing the image and applying gain selectively ”

Interestingly, I found that in its Extra High Mode the Active D-Lighting differentially increases the brightness of all the tones in the profile chart images. However, these increases are relatively small, with the brightest patches pushing the lightest patch from 247 to 249. As the patches get darker (or the exposure is adjusted to make them darker), the difference in the brightness values increases. The greatest numerical difference is seen in the patches that are just a little darker than the 128 midtone

value. Using the Extra High Active D-Lighting increased the brightness reading of these 'dark-midtones' by a value of around 50 on the 0-255 scale. As the patches darken further, the numerical value of the brightening effect decreases, but its significance as a proportion grows. The patch with a brightness value of 24 with Active D-Lighting turned off, for example, has a reading of 49 in the image taken with Active D-Lighting in its Extra High setting. This makes an increase of 25, which is more than the value of the original brightness reading.

On my computer monitor the last five dark patches in the non-Active D-Lighting image cannot be distinguished from their black surroundings. In the Extra High Active D-Lighting image, however, all but the last can be seen.

Although it is surprising that the lightest patches were brightened rather than darkened, I got similar results when photographing







landscapes with Active D-Lighting activated. This suggests that Nikon has decided to allow D300s users to protect the highlights by reducing the exposure, while the camera brightens the shadows. However, as the system is adaptive, it may also darken the highlights when the conditions match specified criteria.

Canon splits its dynamic range optimisation system into two parts: Automatic Lighting Optimiser (ALO), which works on the shadows; and Highlight Tone Priority (HTP), which is designed to preserve highlights. With the Canon EOS 500D I found that although reducing exposure by 1EV mimics the results of using the highlight-focused HTP, images taken at the 'correct' exposure with HTP still have a little more highlight information.

### Conclusion

Although there is an element of highlight darkening with some dynamic range optimiser systems, the most noticeable impact of their use is usually the brightening of the shadows. As a result, it makes sense to use exposure to preserve the highlights and rely on the in-camera system to bring out the shadows.

While raw files contain more data, it isn't always easy to selectively brighten the shadows of an image (post-capture) as effectively as a camera's dynamic range optimisation system can. Fortunately, most proprietary raw file conversion software allows in-camera type adjustments to be applied post-capture. Also, most DSLRs allow simultaneous recording of raw and JPEG files, so it is possible, and sensible, to cover both bases.

## The future

At present, Apical (see below) supplies version 6 of Iridix, but version 7 will soon be available, and I am told there is a camera under development that includes it. This version offers improved colour fidelity and sharpness over earlier editions, but the main focus for its developers has been the reduction of the level of noise seen in brightened areas. The amount of noise in the source area of the image limits the amount of gain that can be applied – and the shadow areas are usually the noisiest part of an image. With Iridix 7, Apical's CEO Michael Tusch claims the company is able to make much stronger adjustments without increasing noise levels.

Iridix 7 is designed to work with full 1080p video, and stills images of up to 64 million pixels and 20-bit depth to cater for potential future camera developments.

In the meantime, Apical is gearing up to release a PC and Mac-compatible software package that will enable photographers to manipulate raw files to get the best from the camera's dynamic range. The price of the software has still to be set, but Tusch tells me that the company is aiming to make it accessible to enthusiast photographers rather than just professionals. I look forward to testing it in the not too distant future.

## Apical

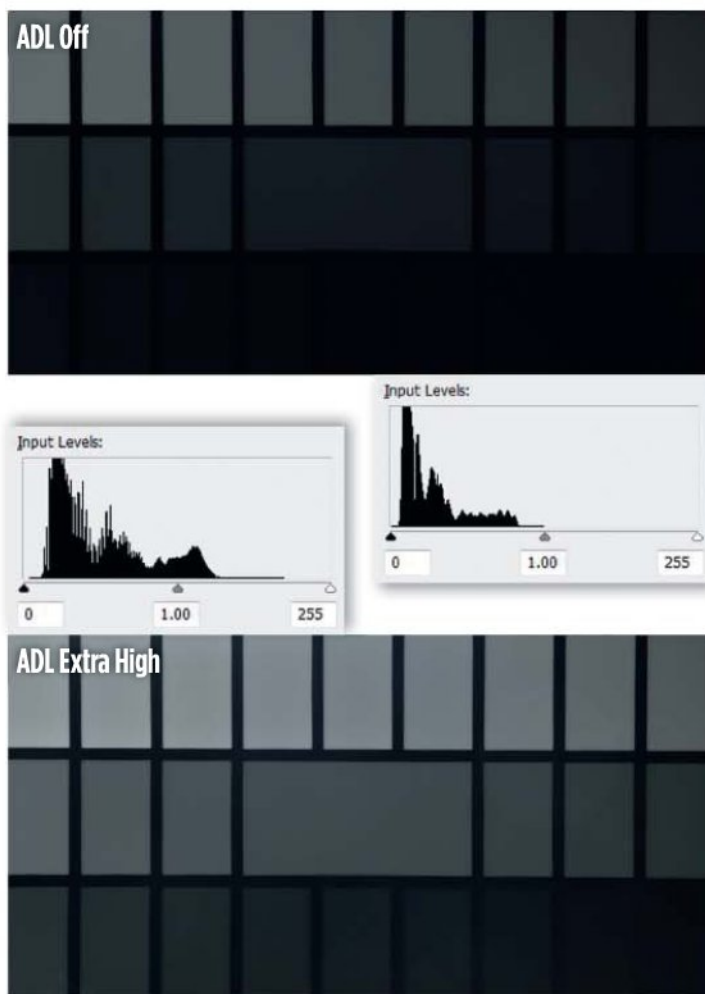
Apical is a UK-based company responsible for the dynamic range optimising algorithms found in many DSLRs. Although only Nikon, Olympus and Sony publicly acknowledge that they use Apical's system, it is likely that it is used more widely. I spoke to Michael Tusch to find out a little more about the technology.

According to Tusch, Apical's aim is to mimic the response of the human eye and brain to a scene containing a wide range of brightness values. The intention is not to produce images that have an obvious HDR (high dynamic range) effect, but to subtly boost the amount of detail visible in the brighter and darker areas. The challenge stems from the fact that the eye is extremely adaptable and the brain is capable of interpreting a scene. This is nicely demonstrated by the simple diagram on the right. We see the sequence of squares and interpret them as being a

chess board that has just two colours. In addition, we see the cylinder as an object resting on it and casting a shadow. In this instance our brains are a little too clever because we interpret the square B as being lighter than square A, whereas in fact they are exactly the same tone.

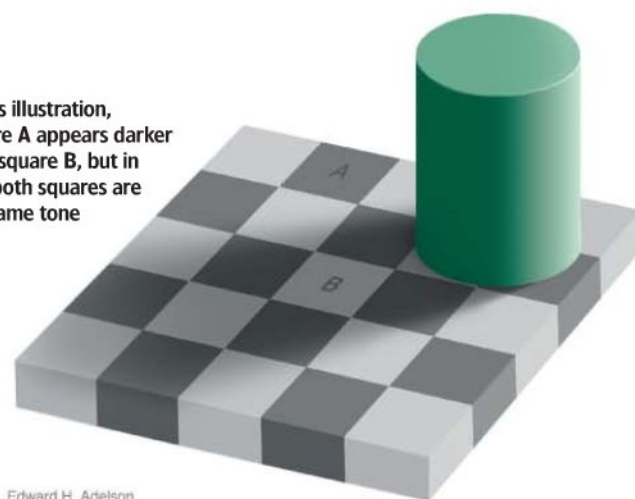
Apical's dynamic range engine, Iridix, works by assessing the brightness of each pixel and comparing it with the brightness of its immediate neighbours, as well as looking at the tonal range of the whole image. It then applies a variable tone curve across the image with individual pixels being brightened separately. In practice, 'all the pixels in one area will have a very similar level of gain applied,' Tusch explains. 'The curve varies smoothly, pixel by pixel.'

Tusch tells me that Iridix is supplied as 'IP core', which describes a layout for part of the silicon chip, or an



These images were taken in manual mode to show the impact of Nikon's Active D-Lighting in the D300s without any exposure adjustment – it is most significant in the darker areas. Each grey patch has been lightened and more of the dark rectangles can be seen. As well as moving to the right (indicating brightening), the histogram is stretched out as the tonal range is expanded

In this illustration, square A appears darker than square B, but in fact both squares are the same tone



Edward H. Adelson

embedded software library, which becomes part of the camera firmware. The variation that we see between different cameras that use Iridix stems from the fact that manufacturers can choose how to implement it. The effect of the system can be increased or

decreased, and weighting parameters allow the system to be set to work on the highlights and shadows separately. Iridix doesn't adjust the exposure of an image when it is activated; that is something the camera manufacturer takes control over.



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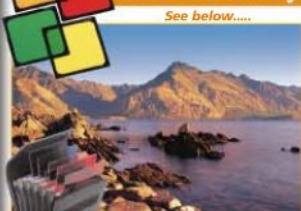
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**Kate Marshall asks** I have recently dug out my old Ricoh 800 EES camera, but the batteries are dead and I can't find replacements. The battery has the number 640 on it and a plus sign inside a circle, but no other information. It measures 1.5cm in diameter and 1cm in depth. Do you know where I can buy some replacement batteries?

**Barney Britton replies** The Ricoh 800 EES used the once-popular PX640 cell, which is no longer manufactured due to concerns about the toxicity of mercury, which is its key ingredient. The good news is that replacement cells are available, and I recommend that you visit The Small Battery Company, based in London, which specialises in replacement versions of old battery types. A modern alkaline equivalent is the PC640A, which will cost you £4.20 (or £3.99 if you buy two or more), inc p&p. You can find more information at [www.smallbatterycompany.org.uk](http://www.smallbatterycompany.org.uk) or by calling 0208 871 3730.

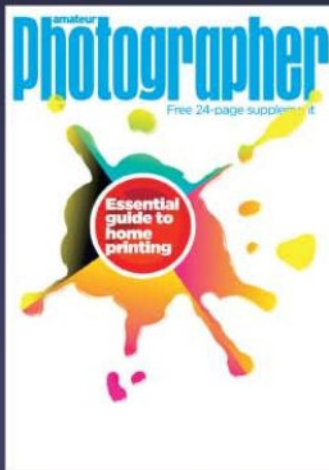


**Bob Humphrey asks** In the printing supplement that came free with AP 19 September, you state that Adobe Gamma is included free with Elements 7. Having looked on the Adobe support pages for help on locating Gamma, I have been unable to locate a Goodies folder on my Elements 7 installation, but I did find it on my old Elements 5 installation. Having read the installation text file, I notice that Adobe states that Gamma will not work with LCD monitors. Is there an updated version for Elements 7 that will operate on LCD monitors?

**Barney Britton replies** You're quite right, Bob, it appears that the information I included in our recent *Home Printing Supplement* was out of date, as is Adobe's website. Adobe is no longer including Gamma with its PC versions of Photoshop and Elements. If you're looking for a free alternative, I suggest you take a look at QuickGamma. QuickGamma is a free program that runs on Windows (up to and including XP) and, after some fiddling, made a significant difference to the uncalibrated screen of one of our office PCs. You can download it from <http://quicksigma.de/indexen.html>.

You can also find a decent screen contrast and brightness test target at [www.photofriday.com/calibrate.php](http://www.photofriday.com/calibrate.php), which works on all operating systems and doesn't require you to download or install any additional software.

I would stress, though, that like Adobe Gamma, both these tools are 'quick fixes' and neither is intended to replace a more sophisticated monitor profiler of the sort mentioned in our round-up in the AP supplement.



David Byrd asks: If two photographers stand next to each other, one with a Nikon D3X (full-frame FX with 24.5-million-pixel) and the other with a Nikon D300 (12.3-million-pixel DX-size sensor), and they both have the same lens fixed, such as a 200mm f/2.8, and they both photograph something, a bird, for example, will the photographer with have more pixels covering that bird?

I know the DX-format photographer will print an equivalent to a 300mm lens, but who could print their picture bigger before losing quality? I'm sure there is a simple formula for calculating when the extra FOV length achieved on a DX sensor is outweighed by the

—DAVID BYRD, [byrd@ey.com](mailto:byrd@ey.com), KEY SCORER



Jo Wroble writes I am thinking of upgrading to the latest Apple OSx 10.5 Snow Leopard operating system, but could you tell me whether Nikon Capture

**David Humble writes** In his answer to the letter from David Byford ('Q&A', AP 26 September), Richard Sibley has failed his maths test. He has forgotten that the multiplication factor refers to linear dimensions, while the number of pixels is linked to area.

The full-frame sensor is roughly twice the width of the Four Thirds sensor, and 1.5x that of the DX sensor. However, the height is also greater by the same factors. Thus, the area of the full-frame sensor is 4x that of the Four Thirds sensor, and 2.25x (1.5x1.5) that of the DX sensor, so a subject occupying 10% of the area of the full-frame sensor (or 84.6mm<sup>2</sup>) occupies 22.5% of the area of the DX sensor and 40% of the area of the Four Thirds sensor. In pixels, this equates to subject coverage of 2.45 million pixels on the Nikon D3x, 2.77 million pixels on the DX-format D300 and 4.8MP on a 12-million-pixel Four Thirds camera.

**John Scanlon writes** In his response to David Byford in AP 26 September, Richard Sibley calculated that the D3x would provide the most coverage in terms of pixels in the final

Traditionally, the viewfinders of SLR (and DSLR) cameras comprise a glass or plastic focusing screen with engraved AF points or guidelines, and a glass or mirrored prism that directs the light from the lens into

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## FROM THE AP FORUM

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### Studio lights

**Mikeez asks** I have been taking family portraits for a while now with natural light and a Nikon Speedlight SB-600 flash. I would like to try studio lighting, and have been looking at the Interfit EX150 Mark II kit, which seems like good value for money. Will this kit be sufficient and give enough light, and will I need anything else alongside my D300 and SB-600 for this kit to operate?

**Gordon\_McGeachie replies** I have this kit and use it connected to the camera with a PC cable, which is supplied. The heads have a built-in sensor, so I don't see why you can't use your SB-600 to activate them, but you may have to watch out for unwanted lighting effects. I haven't taken any full-length portraits with mine, but for everything else there are no problems.

**RichardSibley replies** I have used a Nikon D300 with the Interfit EX150 Mark II kit, and for headshots, half and three-quarter-length portraits the lights are fine, although there is some drop off when used for full-length shots. In a small home studio, however, the results are perfectly acceptable. You may even find that a more powerful studio kit is actually too much for home use.

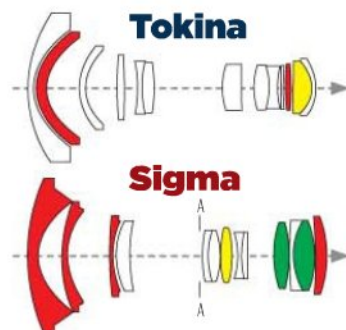
Your SB-600 will have to be set to manual to trigger the EX150 heads to fire. If it is set to iTTL, a pre-flash will fire, triggering the EX150 flash heads before the camera's shutter has opened. To minimise the effect of the flash on the image, set it to its minimum 1/128 power setting.

image. This is incorrect. Richard has confused linear and area magnifications. Despite the apparent differences in subject size caused by the different formats, the image of the bird has the same physical dimensions when projected onto the sensors of both cameras. The 'winner', therefore, is the camera with the higher pixel density. The pixel density of the Nikon D3x is roughly 2.84 million pixels per square cm, as opposed to approximately 3.30 million pixels per square cm on the sensor of the D300, so despite its lower total resolution, the D300 'wins'.

**Barney Britton replies** Thanks to everyone who wrote in on this subject – we've sent Richard out to buy a calculator.

the camera's eyepiece. Usually, the active AF points are highlighted using a coloured LED, which temporarily makes the AF points engraved on the focusing screen light up.

However, some SLRs feature a liquid crystal layer as part of the focusing screen assembly. This allows the cameras to display the active AF points and an optional grid display, as well as other information, directly onto the viewfinder image. The advantage of this is that because the



#### Correction

Barney Britton writes In our test of the Tokina AT-X 124 AF Pro DXII 12-24mm f/4 and Sigma 10-20mm f/3.5 EX DC HSM lenses, the schematics on page 58 are incorrect. The schematic labelled 'Sigma' is the 'Tokina', and vice-versa. The correct versions are shown above.

focusing screen is not engraved, it is less cluttered in normal operation. The disadvantages are that in order to be transparent, the LED layer requires a current to be passed through it. This draws power from the camera's battery (albeit a tiny amount), which is why the viewfinders of cameras with this sort of focusing screen, like the Nikon D3000 and D300s, darken dramatically and cannot be focused when the battery is removed. Barney Britton

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# Amateur Photographer ICONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY



A fairly early chrome Nikon F with plain prism and early 50mm f/2 Nikkor-S



The model everyone remembers: the Nikon FTN with pre-AI 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor, dating from about 1970

## ICONIC CAMERAS

**Ivor Matanle** recalls the huge impact made by the Nikon F and the Nikon system on the camera market of the 1960s

# Nikon F

**T**HE Nikon F was a bigger influence on the aspirations and attitudes of photographers, both amateur and professional, than the Leica had been some 30 years earlier. Announced in 1959, the Nikon F system transformed photojournalism during the ever-changing 1960s and built an unassailable reputation for ruggedness during the Vietnam War. More expensive than its Pentax and Minolta competitors, the Nikon F offered little difference in basic specification, but was tougher, more reliable and less likely to be damaged if dropped. It was the 35mm camera that photographers aspired to and the camera that did more than any other to motivate the shift of dominance in photographic markets from Germany to Japan.

Other reasons for the success of the Nikon F were its full range of similarly rugged and similarly high-quality lenses from 21mm to 1,000mm, its interchangeable viewfinders and focusing screens, and a unique viewfinder that reliably showed exactly 100% of what would be on the negative or

transparency. It was the answer to a whole range of professional news, feature and fashion photographers' prayers. Any photographer with a Nikon F and two or three lenses could be sure of getting the results his or her skill deserved.

### Reassuring

The Nikon F is heavy but well balanced, and a reassuring and straightforward camera to use. In the early days, the Nikon F was normally sold with a simple pentaprism, and a coupled selenium-cell exposure meter could be fitted. In the spring of 1962, the first Nikon Photomic head, which included a prism and a selenium meter, was launched, and this could be used instead of the plain prism. Cameras sold new with this Photomic head instead of the plain prism were branded Nikon F Photomic. Either the prism or the Photomic head could be replaced with a folding waist-level viewfinder, and with the finder removed it was possible to change the viewfinder screen. This was particularly useful to press, sports and wildlife photographers.

A legal dispute with Germany's

Zeiss Ikon, which believed that 'Nikon' transgressed its trademark, made it necessary between 1963 and 1968 for Nippon Kogaku to sell the Nikon F in Germany as the Nikkor F, and cameras, prisms and Photomic heads bearing the name Nikkor are much sought-after by collectors. The lens mount on the Nikon F was a beautifully engineered three-tongue bayonet.

The Nikon F body remained essentially the same from 1959 through to 1973, when some cosmetic changes were made to give it a similar appearance to the Nikon F2, which had been on sale since 1971. In 1966, Nippon Kogaku

bowed to the inevitable and changed its name to Nikon, whereupon the logo on the top plate of the cameras became simply the one engraved word 'Nikon'. Then, in 1973, the last batches of Nikon F bodies gained the plastic-sheathed delay-action actuator and wind lever of the Nikon F2. The result became known as the Nikon F Apollo. A succession of progressively improved Photomic heads increased the camera's exposure metering capabilities. The Photomic T head for the Nikon F, announced in September 1965, was the first through-the-lens metering head, and was followed by the TN head in 1967 and the FTN





head a year later.

The Nikon F Photomic FTN eliminated the need to set the maximum aperture of the lens in use against the ASA rating of the film. Instead, it introduced the automatic setting of the maximum aperture by what became known as the 'wap-wap' method. This refers to the sound made when you insert the lens (always at f/5.6), engaging the prong with the pin as you do so, locking the lens into place, quickly twisting the aperture ring to the smallest aperture and then to the maximum aperture. This causes a mechanical scale on the front of the Photomic FTN head to indicate the maximum aperture of the lens in use, and sets the meter for full-aperture exposure measurement. This procedure became second nature to every Nikon user and, even after the Automatic Indexing (AI) system of the late 1970s made it unnecessary, most Nikon users continued to 'wap-wap' their lenses from sheer habit.

## Age did not weary them

By the beginning of the 1970s, the Nikon F looked out of date so Nikon developed a new, smoother contoured camera that retained lens compatibility with the F but offered useful design improvements. This was the Nikon F2. It was initially intended that the F2 would, as was normal in the industry, simply supersede the F, but the huge professional following of the F made it clear that this was not a good idea. So, for almost four years, photographers had a choice between the F and the F2 until the Nikon F Apollo was finally phased out at the end of 1974.

The F2 had a conventional opening back instead of the slide-off back of the F. Its titanium-foil focal-plane shutter had a top shutter speed of 1/2000sec instead of the 1/1000sec of the F. The highest flash synchronisation speed, 1/60sec on the F, was now 1/80sec, with a

special setting on the shutter-speed dial to provide that. Like the F, it had interchangeable viewfinders and screens, but the finders are not cross-compatible. Most F2s were sold as F2 Photomics, with the DP-1 Photomic finder in place, but many professionals bought the plain DE-1 prism finder as an addition to, or instead of, the Photomic finder. Motordrives were becoming increasingly popular among news and sports photographers as the motordrives became lighter and more manageable, and the weighty '60s vintage F-36 and F-250 motordrive units for the Nikon F gave way to the smaller MD-1, MD-2 and MD-3 units for the F2 series. It has been argued that it was the benefits and increasing importance of compact motordrive units that finally drew professionals towards the Nikon F2.

In 1973, Nikon launched a version of the F2 called the F2S Photomic. It had a new solid-state Photomic head in which correct exposure, for the first time in a Nikon, was indicated by illuminated LEDs rather than a swinging needle. With a new DS-1EE electronic control unit, which rotated the aperture ring in response to the Photomic head's exposure reading, the F2S Photomic could be used with shutter-priority automatic

exposure. In October 1976, a version with silicon photodiodes instead of LEDs appeared, known as the Nikon F2SB, and this was notable as the first camera in the series to drop the Photomic designation.

Nikon's AI system arrived in 1977, as did the Nikon F2A which incorporated it. The F2A was equipped with the improved DP-11 metering head (still with a swinging needle), and with the new range of AI lenses the 'wap-wap' setting procedure was no longer needed. Non-AI lenses could still be used, but metering had to be carried out at the taking aperture. Later in 1977 came the Nikon F2AS, whose DP-12 head incorporated similar silicon diode exposure indication to that of the F2S.

Among those who grew up or spent their early career with Nikon F equipment, the F2 has never quite supplanted the F in their affections. A Nikon F Photomic FTN with f/1.4 Nikkor is a big heavy camera, and one of the biggest and heaviest to use 35mm film. Some argue that it is clumsy, but it is one of the best pieces of engineering in the history of photography.

## Nikon lenses

Most early Nikon F cameras were sold with the 5cm f/2 Nikkor-S lens, although from March 1960 a 5.8cm f/1.4 Nikkor-S optic was available. In 1962, the 5.8cm f/1.4 Nikkor was replaced with the 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor-S, and the 5.8cm f/1.4 lenses are now scarce collectibles. In April

1963, the 5cm f/2 Nikkor-S gave way to the improved 50mm f/2 Nikkor-H. Lenses for the F ranged from a 21mm (mirror-up) wideangle through what were then the usual focal lengths and aperture options to a monster 1,000mm Nikkor. The lenses and the extent of the range were progressively improved over some 40 years. Until autofocus arrived, every Nikon reflex lens ever made fitted every F-series camera ever made, and virtually all of them fitted Nikkormat cameras.

Nikon lenses made between 1959 and 1976 were designed for the original Nikon F cameras and Photomic meter heads, so they had the familiar slotted prong attached to the aperture ring at the f/5.6 position, which engaged with the pin of the meter to communicate the aperture in use to the exposure meter. After Automatic Indexing lenses appeared in 1976/77, the prong remained to maintain compatibility with earlier cameras, but it was unnecessary for use with the Nikon F2A, F2AS and subsequent F models. Most pre-AI Nikon lenses could be converted to AI and many were. Lenses made before 1966 had 'Nippon Kogaku' as the manufacturer's name on the lens bezel. After 1966, the name is 'Nikon'.

## How much?

A Nikon F Photomic FTN body, cosmetically superb and with a fully operational exposure meter, was recently sold on eBay for £200. Another, with an early number beginning 64 – the



**A Nikon F with a model II Photomic head (non-TTL) and 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor, with (l-r): 35mm f/2.8 Nikkor, 28mm f/3.5 Nikkor, 45mm f/2.8 GN (guide number) Nikkor, 35mm f/2.8 PC (perspective control) Nikkor and an early 5.5cm f/3.5 Micro-Nikkor with pre-set diaphragm**

**Made for the German market in the 1960s, a Nikkor F with 5cm f/2 Nikkor-S, a Nikkor J (Nikkorex) and a Nikkor FTN metering head**



## 1959 Nikon F first appears

Caves in Nerja, Spain, are discovered. Britain's SRN1 hovercraft crosses Channel for first time. MGM's *Ben Hur* released to huge acclaim.

## 1962 First Nikon Photomic head appears

Cuban missile crisis. Adolf Eichmann hanged. New Coventry Cathedral consecrated.



# Amateur Photographer ICONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

first type of Photomic head – and a 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor, all in used but quite smart condition, made £275. A black F2 Photomic body in nice condition, fully operational, was sold for £220. Allow for about 50% higher prices if you are buying from a classic camera dealer who provides a guarantee. Pre-AI lenses like the 35mm f/2.8, 28mm f/3.5, 135mm f/3.5 and 200mm f/4 are common and easily obtainable for as little as £30–£70.

**A black Nikon F2 Photomic with 50mm f/2 Nikkor, a chrome Nikon F2S with 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor and lenses (l-r): 135mm f/2.8 pre-AI Nikkor, 7.5mm f/5.6 fisheye Nikkor and viewfinder, 35mm f/2 Nikkor and 55mm f/1.2 Nikkor**



## Accessories

**J**UST about every accessory imaginable was available for the Nikon F and F2, and six pages of Peter Braczko's excellent *Nikon Handbook* are devoted to 38 different viewfinders for a start. There were 15 different focusing screens, two motordrives for the F and four for the F2, 250-exposure backs, data backs, all the usual close-up devices such as close-up lenses, tubes and bellows units, special (Leica-type) cable releases, endless filters, hoods, caps and

Back row: Motordrives and drive accessories. Second row: Viewfinders, a flash coupler and a typical lens hood and box. Third row: Cable release and the earliest Nikon F exposure meter. Front row: Eyesight correction lens selector, prisms, a polarising filter and a macro ring adapter for the bellows units

telescope adapters, to name just a few. The quality is all the same, which is very high.

## If you're buying

### Watch out for: Photomic meter problems

Although the camera bodies and lenses are extremely reliable, Photomic FT and FTN exposure meters suffer from erratic readings caused by wear to a variable resistor that eventually stops them working at all.

### Damaged titanium shutter blinds

The titanium shutter blinds of the Nikon F, while usually in good condition, are very delicate and easily damaged. Avoid cameras with extensively dented blinds.

### Bent coupling prong

I have had two Nikon F cameras that had a damaged meter coupling prong. I may have been unlucky, but this is a problem that can be expensive to sort out 40-odd years on.

### Sluggish diaphragm

With semi-auto or auto diaphragm lenses, make sure the diaphragm snaps shut the moment the shutter is fired.

**Stiff focusing** The lubricant in lenses more than 50 years old has commonly dried out, leaving the focusing mount stiff and in need of lubrication.

## You may also like...

A Canon F1, the first really successful competition for the Nikon F in the professional market.



Thanks to Grays of Westminster and to Barney Britton for the loan of the Nikon equipment photographed. Visit my blog at [www.classic-camera.net/page/editors-view.aspx](http://www.classic-camera.net/page/editors-view.aspx)

### 1968

**Nikon Photomic FTN announced**

'I'm Backing Britain' campaign. Martin Luther King assassinated. Robert Kennedy murdered.

### 1971

**Nikon F2 launched**

Idi Amin becomes President of Uganda. Britain's currency goes decimal. House of Commons votes to join European Community.

### 1977

**Nikon F2A and AI lenses/system announced**

Jimmy Carter inaugurated as US President. Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. Death of Elvis Presley.

## Join the PCCGB

The Photographic Collectors' Club of Great Britain holds regional meetings, runs a quarterly postal auction and publishes magazines full of classic camera information. Visit [www.pccgb.com](http://www.pccgb.com) for more information and to download a membership form or call 01920 821 611 (but not to ask for valuations on cameras).



# Ogden Chesnutt

... SEES THE BEACH AS HALF-EMPTY,  
EVEN WHEN IT'S FULL



**OGDEN CHESNUTT** An avid AP reader since birth, Ogden Chesnutt lives for photography and the sound of a tripped shutter. In the third issue of each month he'll be sharing his photographic experiences and thoughts, as well as his adventures with his camera club friend Eli.

**R**ICK the barman saunters past, and in one fluid motion collects the empty glasses spread around me like Terracotta Army soldiers and replaces their imposing presence with a bacon, Brie and walnut sandwich. Although it's not called a sandwich. 'Are those pictures new?' Rick asks. 'Aye,' I say. 'I was down in Brighton at the weekend.' 'Oh, I love Brighton. But I've never seen Brighton look like that,' he says, pointing at a dark picture of the old pier at sundown. 'It's so... gloomy.'

He's right. My pictures are gloomy. I'm sure it's partly to do with my miserable nature. I always see the pint half-empty, even when it's full, but this time I was trying extra hard for melancholy.

When I'm shooting moody stuff I find I work best if I'm on my own, so I left Eli to go shopping for new pans with his girlfriend and caught a train to the coast on what was probably the last nice weekend of the year. I anticipated throngs of people – sunbathers, drinkers, lovers and loiterers – all trying to squeeze in one last ounce of enjoyment from our fleeting summer before we're met with winter's big wet kiss. I figured it would be a brilliant opportunity for street shots.

The promenade hummed with the sounds of musicians and carnival rides, and every three seconds my finger crushed the shutter button at some new fantastic scene or whimsy. More than the visual beauty, though, I wanted to translate into pictures the sounds and smells and communal resignation I was sensing that this was the end of the summer, so let's live it up while we can. I covered miles of that beach. When my knees were about to give, I sat with a hot dog to review my shots.

This DSLR is fantastic in that I no longer feel guilty for taking pointless pictures. But I do miss the surprise of not finding out what I captured until I get my film back. Film also has a way of forcing you to say 'when' on a composition, which I miss, and the DSLR's playback panel feels like another symbol of modern gluttony. So I've found a compromise. I don't check the LCD after I take a shot. Instead, I move on to another subject. Only before I leave the vicinity do I review my pictures. If one is slightly off but worth returning to, then I'll shuffle back over and try it again.

This day, however, I greedily shoved the hot dog into my face like a modern glutton so I could review my pictures quicker. As I flicked through, my sated grin fell into a rictus of astonishment. After each frame I glanced around the beach just to make sure I really was in Brighton on the last sunny weekend of the year. Because my pictures could have been taken anywhere.

'Some of them are quite nice. Like these ones,' Rick says, pointing to some cheerful prints that made their debut when Rick took away the empty Guinness glass they were sitting beneath. I don't tell him these were the offending images that nearly made me choke on my hot dog. 'They're very classic scenes.'

And that's the problem. I'd set out to make something unique. But, like a struggling comedian who falls back on mother-in-law jokes, I failed to find my

voice in Brighton. In a bustling city on a day replete with simmering energy, I was only able to capture the Brighton of postcards. How droll it all was. Originality – that's what people want.

The light was fading as I finished

my hotdog, so I scurried back to the places I'd stopped at earlier. Couples still sat arm-in-arm. Cops still chatted with the revellers while trying to maintain their professionalism. Kids dug for shells in front of the old pier. People were clinging on to this day. I changed the white balance on my camera to 'shade' to exaggerate the sunset and the idea that end of this day was the end of summer. I worked hastily, and even broke my rule of reviewing my pictures after each shot, but in a matter of minutes I was able to capture Brighton on that day, without capturing Brighton.

Rick unloads his empties behind the bar and picks up my offending prints. 'I do really like these,' he says. 'I'd hang them on my wall. I'd hang them on this wall!' He points to a burgundy section underneath the spirits. 'Our own in-house artist!'

'Have them,' I say, gesturing with a little wave of dismissal to transfer custody.

'How much?' he asks.

'I'm getting old. There are days I'm bound to be grumpy and irrational. Just keep letting me drink here.'

'Is that all? I'd never refuse you a drink, Ogden?' I take a bite of my sandwich and give him a thumbs-up. Rick clears some space on the wall, and then the bombshell:

'I would have paid £100 for these,' he says. Originality, my arse. **AP**

“I was only able to capture the Brighton of postcards. How droll it all was”

## amateur Photographer

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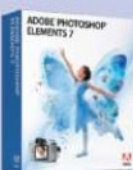
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